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VENEZUELA
ECUADOR
GUAYANA INGLESA
GUAYANA HOLANDESA
GUAYANA FRANCESA
ISTMO DE PANAMA
Panama
Colon
I.Quibo
Cartagena
Sta Marta
R.Hacha
C.Gallinas
C.Vela
Maracaibo
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Macas
C.Blanco
Paita
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I.Granada
I.Tobago
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Cumaná
Barcelona
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El Pao
R.Orinoco
Achaguas
Atures
Maroa
Ft S.Carlos
Casiquiare
GEORGETOWN
Berbice
PARAMARIBO
CAYENA
SA DE LA PARIMA
SA PACARAIMA
R.Meta
R.Guaviare
R.Inirida
Rio Negro
R.Branco
R.Caroni
R.Yuruari
R.Cuyuni
Upata
Rio de las Amazonas
Santarem
Barra
Moura
Barcellos
Fonteboa
S.Antonio
S.Pablo
Ega o Teffe
Coary
R.Amazonas
R.Madeira
R.Tapajos
R.Jurua
R.Purus
R.Putumayo
R.Napo
R.Curaray
R.Tigre
R.Marañon
R.Huallaga
R.Papamene ó Caqueta
San Juan de los Llanos
Isla Johannes
I.Caviana
I.Maraca
Macapa
Montalegre
Almeirim
Tarnana
Oeiras
S.Joao das duas Barras
R.Tocantins
Va Bonia
Aveiro
Gurupá
J. WELLS

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TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES

IN

SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA.

WITH

Life in the Llanos of Venezuela.

BY

DON RAMON PAEZ.

"NIHIL ARDUUM MORTALIBUS."

HARTFORD:
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PREFACE.

It was my lot several years ago—I need not state how many—to be brought forth into this world amid the wild scenes which I propose to describe. Later in life I was fortunate enough to be sent by my parents to England, for the purpose of finishing my education under the tuition of the learned fathers at the College of Stonyhurst. While there, I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of the inimitable author of "Wanderings in South America," Charles Waterton, Esq., who years before had also been an inmate of that celebrated institution, and whose book became at once my favorite study, on account of the graphic descriptions it contains of animals and objects with which I was already familiar. The works of the distinguished traveller, Baron von Humboldt, who first made those regions known to the civilized world, next afforded me an endless source of scientific enjoyment, developing in me an early taste for the natural history and physical wonders of my native land.

On my return home, I immediately turned my steps toward

> "Those matted woods . . . . .
> Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey,"

anxious to study nature in her own sanctuary; but, owing to the unfortunate state of affairs in the country, I did not enjoy long my cherished dreams of exploring it through all its extent. Sufficient information was, however, obtained in my rambles through the plains, to enlarge upon a subject scarcely touched upon by travellers.

Thus from my earliest days have I been associated with the scenes forming the text of the present narrative, which I venture to lay before the public, trusting more in the indulgence and characteristic generosity of the Anglo-Saxon race toward foreigners, than in my own ability to fulfil the arduous undertaking.

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INTRODUCTION.

"Know'st thou the land where the citron grows,
Where midst its dark foliage the golden orange glows?
Thither, thither let us go."

GOETHE.

TO YOUNG AMERICA:

"Smart," as the world over, you are acknowledged to be—in which opinion I most heartily concur, having myself spent among you the best part of my life—permit me to call your attention to one important fact which has escaped your notice thus far, or rather that of your teachers, namely, a better acquaintance with that vast and glorious portion of our great continent lying at your very portals, South America—a region of which you have only a faint idea from the meagre information supplied by your School Geographies and occasional newspaper correspondents, but in fact a land of wondrous exuberance and untold natural wealth, which offers you a field of enterprise worthy of the founders of the States of California and Oregon, and the Territories of Montana, Arizona, and Colorado.

It is a fact that while Europe, situated as it is far beyond our own hemisphere, has always sent her *very best* men to represent her in the South American States, and to explore

and report upon every thing worth knowing, this country, America *par excellence*, has sent *none* as yet but broken down and quarrelsome politicians, who, according to the statements of some of the leading periodicals of this country,* are absolutely incompetent to fill their post with credit to the nation they represent. To my own personal knowledge I can testify as to the class of men sent afloat to Venezuela, one of whom had previously been master of a tug-boat on the Orinoco and Apure rivers, but through political influence at home was suddenly enabled to emerge from that obscure though honorable calling to that of a diplomatic functionary, although it is but fair to state that his social status in that country was in no wise improved by his change of vocation. When his term of office expired, with the change of administration at headquarters, he was duly replaced by another, whose conduct was so disgraceful† that his countrymen resident in the Republic petitioned the Government at home to remove him forthwith, which was granted, but only to replace him by another—since deceased—who, I am informed, was the only drunken man seen in the streets of the capital.

Thanks to the unaided efforts of a missionary gentleman, Rev. Mr. Fletcher,‡ the magnificent empire of Brazil has lately been brought to the notice of the people of the United States, who, quick to appreciate the commercial advantages offered by a foreign country, when fully demonstrated to them, have already established a line of steamers between New York and

* *Vide* New York "Herald," of July 17th and Aug. 5th, 1867.

† *Vide* New York "World," of Aug. 5th, 1866.

‡ Author of "Brazil and the Brazilians."

the principal ports of the Empire. Outside of this the people of this enterprising country have only had occasional glimpses of the vast continent of South America, from the notes of casual travellers and the official reports of Lieuts. Page, Herndon, and Gibbon, of the navy, who confined their observations principally to the practicability of navigating the two great rivers Amazon and La Plata, already surveyed by their respective governments and explored from end to end by several European travellers. It is to be hoped, however, that the eminent naturalist, Agassiz, who lately visited the former river with reference to a particular branch of science, will give us the result of his explorations as clearly, and relieved of the technicalities of scientific lore so common among naturalists, as the distinguished artist Church, who several years ago penetrated, "on his own hook," to the *heart of the Andes*, has presented the grand and beautiful ridge on canvass to the eyes of admiring thousands who have gazed upon his admirable paintings, thus familiarising the outside world with that picturesque region, and earning for himself a name second to none in the estimation of the artistic world.

North Americans cannot longer *ignore* that great section of our continent which, during thirteen years, *warred to the knife* against her powerful antagonists, Spain and Portugal, for the possession of those political principles proclaimed years before by their own Great Republic; for it is a fact, that while most of the European nations hastened to acknowledge the independence of the South American States, the United States of America were the last to recognize them; and if we of the South have not been as successful in the

establishment of Republican Institutions as our brethren of the North, the fault is not ours, but is to be attributed to the "peculiar institutions" implanted on our soil by its fanatical and remorseless conquerors, so utterly inimical to enlightened educational development.*

And now look, on the other hand, to the host of distinguished names that figure among the European representatives and explorers in the various sections of South America and the advantages gained by the countries they represent. At the head of all stands the illustrious Humboldt, who was the first to penetrate that comparatively unknown region at the time (1799), and to lay open her wondrous treasures before the civilized world. Any eulogistic comments upon this truly great man are superfluous: the world is filled with his fame, as radiant as the celestial spheres above, which he overran likewise with his penetrating mind, and after devoting nearly three quarters of a century to the study of the Universe, he died only a few years ago at the advanced age of ninety-two, in the full enjoyment of his mental faculties. His works are the grandest monument of the nineteenth century.

To Prussia we are indebted for the services of another resolute explorer, Prince Adalbert, who fearlessly penetrated to the remotest parts of Brazil, and the botanists, von Tschudi, Karzten, and Moritz, who have enriched the European

* "Such is the state to which colonial politics and mal-administration have during three centuries reduced a country which, for natural weath, may vie with all that is most wonderful on earth."

HUMBOLDT, *Travels*, vol. iii., c. 27.

museums and conservatories with the treasures of our Flora. Other parts of Germany have sent no less distinguished individuals in the persons of Prince Maximilian of Bavaria, and the great naturalists, Narterer, Spix, and von Martius, all of whom have given to the scientific world the result of their explorations in works of enduring fame. France ranks next in distinguished names, such as La Condamine, D'Orvigni, Jussieu, St. Hilaire, Bonpland (the companion of Humboldt), Depons, Lavayesse, Webber, Liais, etc.; and Great Britain, with her Parishes and Fitzroys, who surveyed and carefully sounded every estuary, bay, and inlet which lie between the Plata and the Bay of Valparaiso, with the celebrated naturalist, Darwin, as co-laborer; Sir Robert Schumbourgh, the discoverer of that vegetable wonder, the Victoria Regia, and the hitherto unknown sources of the great river Orinoco, the lake of Parime, supposed in the seventeenth century to be the abode of a mighty and resplendent Indian king —El Dorado—the gilded, from whom that veritable land of gold, as it has subsequently been demonstrated, took the name*—with other equally enterprising naturalists and explorers, such as Waterton, Wallace, Bates, Vigne, Markham, and Spruce. Through the efforts of the two last named, England has succeeded in transplanting and successfully culti-

* The late discoveries made in Venezuelian Guiana prove that the statements of Sir Walter Raleigh and other adventurers of his time were not without foundation, as gold of the finest quality and in the greatest abundance, is now gathered over an extent of territory surpassing in richness and natural resources the famous California and Australia placers.

vating in the mountains of India the various species of cinchona trees indigenous to the Andean range of mountains, that yield that invaluable drug, quinine; while another enterprising Englishman undertook to stock Australia with the Alpaca sheep of the same region, at the risk of his life and fortune.

Thus England, France, and Germany have secured the monopoly of the South American trade, with total exclusion of this country, which has to pay *cash* for what the former obtain in exchange for the produce of their manufactories. All these nations, moreover, appoint permanent representatives, chosen from among their ablest diplomats, and keep them there as long as they choose to remain, to enable them to become thoroughly acquainted with the people and the peculiarities of the country, endearing themselves to the inhabitants by their munificent hospitality and courtly demeanor. Even distant and snow-bound Russia has sent to South America her commissions of *savants*, and maintains there, as well as Sweden, competent representatives, whose duty it is to report to their respective governments on the progress of affairs and the resources of those countries.

I shall not close the list of European travellers and naturalists, with whom I am acquainted, without adding those of Holland and Belgium, viz., Mr. Langsberg, for many years Minister Plenipotentiary from the former country to Venezuela, Baron Ponthos, and Messrs. Linden and Funk, who, by their united efforts, have contributed to enlighten their countrymen respecting the source from whence India-rubber emanates, and the kind of trees that yield the val-

nable Calisaya and Angostura barks; what plants yield the fragrant Vanilla and Tonka beans, the healing balsams of Copaiva, Tolu, and Peru; and how indigo, cacao, and coffee are raised. "Does cotton grow in Venezuela?" "Are there any railroads in Chile?" are questions which have respectively been addressed to me and to the accredited Minister of the latter flourishing republic to the United States by persons enjoying the greatest advantages of education in this country. Now, it is a well-known fact to European merchants that the cotton raised in Venezuela ranks among the finest in the world; and as regards railroads, Chile possesses some of the most admirable works of the kind, due to the skill of North American engineers.

But no wonder that so little is known here about South America, when one of the standard School Geographies and most recent publications describes the products of Venezuela in these few lines:

"Its principal products are the *woods* and *fruits* of the forest and the *cattle* of the plains."

"Exports.—The principal exports are the *tropical fruits*, which grow without cultivation; and hides, cattle, horses, and mules."

Any one would be led to suppose, from the perusal of the above quotations, that the country at large is "in a state of nature," and that the inhabitants themselves are no better off than "the cattle of the plains,"

> "Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
> The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;
> Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey,
> And savage men more murderous still than they."
>
> —*The Deserted Village.*

These things are only found in the depths of the primeval forest, or amidst the labyrinths of rivers that traverse the vast extent of prairie land or *llanos* which form the subject of this book. These are the grazing grounds as well as military school of the republic: the agricultural portion lies north of this region, amidst the great chain of mountains, which, detaching itself from the main Andean trunk in New Granada, or Colombia, as it is now called, runs eastward along the shores of the Caribbean Sea. The products of this region consist principally, as the school-book quoted above states, in the tropical fruits, not collected at random, as might be inferred from the above meager statement, but through the most careful cultivation, as a contemporary English traveller in that country rightly describes it in a few lines.

"July 11th.—Having got our passports, we started at about 3 P. M. for San Pedro, distant about six leagues. The first three leagues lay through the beautiful valley of Chacao (Caracas). Everything bore the appearance of great prosperity. The road was as good as any in Europe. The hedges were beautifully clipped; hardly a foot of ground could be seen that was not in a high state of cultivation. The plantations were numerous and in good order, and the long chimneys and black smoke showed that even in this remote valley steam was rendering its thousand-handed assistance. We crossed and recrossed the Rio Guaire several times before we arrived at Antimano, some two leagues distant from Caracas. We met several herds of wild cattle, being driven towards Caracas by the llaneros in crimson or blue ponchos, mounted on high-picked saddles, with their constant companion, the

lasso, plaited into their horses' tails, and the long cattle-spears in their hands. The cattle were magnificent-looking animals, and reminded me of the breed that one sees in the bull-rings of old Spain. Coffee is more cultivated in the valley of Chacao than any other crop, and it contributes in no small degree to the beauty of the scenery." *

Besides coffee this country produces the famous *Cacao* and indigo of Caracas, sugar-cane, and cotton of superior quality, tobacco hardly inferior to that of Cuba, especially the celebrated Varinas and Guacharo kinds, rice, Indian-corn, and most of the cereals of northern latitudes, according to the elevation above the sea level; and as to the products gathered "in a state of nature," such as sarsaparilla, India-rubber, Piassaba, Vanilla, and Tonka beans, cabinet and dye-woods, their name is legion, and would require a separate volume devoted to that particular branch of scientific research, which the reader can find admirably compiled in the works of Humboldt and Bonpland, St. Hilaire, Sir Robert Schombourgh, Codazzi, and others.

Now it is my purpose to introduce the young American reader to a country—

> "Where maidens' love as close, as sweet will twine,
> As cling the tendrils of their native vine,"

and which hitherto seems to have been a sealed book to the future "Merchant Princes" of the great North. Humboldt describes it thus, in 1802:—

* "Rambles and Scrambles in North and South America," by Edward Sullivan, Esq. London, 1852.

VENEZUELA.

"Caracas is the capital of a country nearly twice as large as Peru, and now little inferior in extent to the kingdom of New Granada. This country, which the Spanish government designates by the name of Capitania-General de Caracas, or the United Provinces of Venezuela, has nearly a million of inhabitants, among whom are sixty thousand slaves. It comprises, along the coasts, New Andalusia, or the province of Cumana (with the island of Margarita), Barcelona, Venezuela, or Caracas, Coro, and Maracaibo: in the interior the Provinces of Barinas and Guiana; the former situated on the rivers of Santo Domingo and the Apure, the latter stretching along the Orinoco, the Casiquiare, the Atabapo, and the Rio Negro. In a general view of the seven United Provinces of Tierra Firme, we perceive that they form three distinct zones, extending from East to West.

"We find, first, cultivated land along the sea-shore, and near the chain of the mountains on the coast; next, savannas or pasturages; and finally, beyond the Orinoco, a third zone, that of the forests, into which we can penetrate only by the rivers which traverse them. If the native inhabitants of the forest lived entirely on the produce of the chase, like those of the Missouri, we might say that the three zones, into which we have divided the territory of Venezuela, picture the three states of human society; the life of the wild hunter, in the

woods of the Orinoco; pastoral life in the savannas or llanos, and the agricultural state, in the high valleys, and at the foot of the mountains on the coast."*

And yet this favored region can be reached in from twelve to fifteen days by sailing packets between Philadelphia and La Guaira; or, should your *fast* habits require it, we can avail ourselves of the Brazilian line of steamships which will leave us at St. Thomas, where we shall meet the little steamer plying regularly between both points, the whole voyage being thus accomplished in eight days. As we are not in a hurry, however, to get through our journey, we will, for the sake of convenience and diversified amusement, follow the example of the above-mentioned traveller, Sullivan, who, in company of a friend, made the trip before us in a commodious yacht by the way of the West India Islands; but having no craft of our own, we may be permitted to borrow from the New York yacht squadron one of their idle cutters, which can thus be better employed than in cruising round well-known fashionable retreats during a few months of summer, and exposed for the rest of the year to the hard knocks of a wintry climate. This is the best season to visit the tropics, as well as the West Indies, when there is no fear of the dreaded *vomito* or sweeping hurricanes.

Hardly a day passes without coming in sight of some lovely isle of the Caribbean sea, which, like the "Queen of the Antilles,"—Cuba—rises from amidst the placid waves, crowned with perpetual wreaths of fragrant orange-blossoms

* Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America.

and stately palms. Cuba, Hayti, Porto Rico, St. Thomas, Sta. Cruz, Antigua, Granada, Barbadoes, Martinique, Guadaloupe, Tobago, and Trinidad, rise one after another in quick succession. When we reach the last named and most lovely of all, on the eastern extremity of Venezuela, we have the choice of either penetrating at once into the field of our adventures by entering one of the numerous outlets of the Orinoco, which here pours out its tribute to the mighty Atlantic through a hundred mouths; or, following the line of coast to the westward, we may reach a point near the fertile valleys of Aragua, where well-trained horses for the sport and hardy llaneros to guide us, await our arrival. We shall thus have an opportunity of contemplating and admiring that stupendous chain of mountains (fit offspring of the mighty Andes further west), which seems as if thrown up by Titanic force as a barrier against the encroachments of the fierce Atlantic.

Endless are the beauties and points of interest presented by this splendid chain of mountains; its varied climes, from the scorching heats of the *tierra caliente* on the sea level to the frigid blasts of winter at higher elevations; its silvery springs and roaring cataracts; its unrivalled vegetation and glittering veins of precious metals. The trade winds and currents are in our favor, which will enable us to reach La Guaira in a couple of days, passing in quick succession some minor ports, such as Rio Caribe, Carupano, with its silver-bearing mountains in the distance, the island of Margarita, famous for its pearls, as the name implies; its fisheries, and the gallant defence made by the inhabitants against the

combined attacks of the Spanish hordes; Cumana, for its delicious grapes and pine-apples, its salubrious climate, and the purity of the sky, which enabled the immortal Humboldt to watch in wonderment the great meteoric shower in 1799, which he compared to a brilliant display of fire-works; Barcelona, noted only for its hides, and the Monagas brotherhood, who were for many years the terror of the country.

The coast, as we approach La Guaira, is lined with plantations of sugar-cane, cacao and cocoa-nuts, two articles often confounded in English spelling, but widely different in themselves. The former grows on a moderately-sized tree. with large, glossy leaves, while the latter is the product of a palm, remarkable for the height it attains, and the prodigious size of its fruit, in bunches that few men can lift from the ground. The *cacao* nuts, on the contrary, grow in pods, resembling large cucumbers, of a rich chocolate color outside, filled with oblong nuts enveloped in a white, sub-acid pulp, very agreeable to the taste especially of parrots, monkeys, and squirrels, who destroy great quantities of the pods for the sake of the pulp, so that they require constant watching to protect them from these pests.

A cacao plantation is one of the handsomest orchards that can be seen, shaded as they are by another tree of large proportions, the erythrina, a leguminous plant with crimson flowers, which you may have noticed in greenhouses at home, though much reduced in size, as it never attains there more than a few feet above the boxes on which they are raised as an ornament to the garden in summer. The rapidity with which these trees grow in the tropics is astonishing, for in

eight or ten years, the time required to reach its maximum growth, they attain the size of the largest denizens of the forest. Observe how their tops glow with the fiery hue of their blossoms, for this is the season when they exchange their leaves for flowers, the only instance of a plant shedding its leaves in these latitudes, with the exception of the *ceiba* or silk cotton tree, which the author of Amyas Leigh has so admirably described as growing close to where we are journeying just now.

Here the cordillera rises considerably above the connecting mountains, attaining a height of thirteen thousand feet in the peak of Naiguata, which you may perceive peeping through the clouds yonder, and the next one eleven thousand in the Cerro de Avila, both forming what is called the Silla, or Saddle of Caracas, at the foot of which stands La Guaira, the principal port of the republic, but the vilest anchorage in the world. Here ends our yacht excursion; trusting in future to the nimble-footed mule or to the thumping stage coaches for the rest of the journey.

Despite its wretched shipping facilities, La Guaira carries on a very active trade with foreign marts, as is attested by the number of English, French, German, and Italian merchants, with a few Americans, residing here, forming, as it were a truly foreign colony. The heat, as you perceive, is intense, owing to the proximity of the barren mountain-base, which leaves room scarcely for a loaded mule to turn round in the narrow and crowded-up streets. On this account, I presume, La Guaira is very healthy, for not even the Asiatic cholera could obtain a *footing* here—excuse the pun—when

it decimated the capital in 1853. Cases of *vomito* occur from time to time; but these are more the exception than the rule; so it does not follow that all hot places in the tropics are unhealthy, for Carupano, Margarita, Cumana, La Guaira, and Coro, which are within the isothermal line of greatest heat—owing, doubtless, to the dry, stony, or sandy soil on which they stand—are among the healthiest spots in Venezuela. However, we shall soon be out of this sultry place, and amidst the glories of a temperate climate. For this purpose we will hire mules at one of the *posadas* or hotels, to ascend the mountains on our way to Caracas, the capital of the republic, giving the preference to the *old road*, which is much shorter and more picturesque than the new one for carriage travel. Let us hear first the enthusiastic English tourist describe this route, as I may be accused by some of partiality towards my own country.

"The ascent is very precipitous, and the road rough and narrow, but the view of the boundless ocean on one hand, and the magnificent range of mountains on the other, was very grand. The road rather reminded me of the Great St. Bernard, though the resemblance would not bear analyzing. The sensation of rising gradually into the cooler strata of air was most delicious; and at length, being suddenly enveloped in a cloud, I felt actually cold (a novel sensation I had not experienced for several months), and was not at all sorry to put on my jacket. There is no mountain in the tropics where you rise as immediately and suddenly from the stifling heat of the Tierra Caliente to the delicious temperature of an European sunrise in spring, as the Silla of Caracas.

"On the road from Vera Cruz to Mexico, when the traveller arrives at the height of four thousand feet, beyond which the fever never spreads, he is upwards of thirty miles from the sea, whereas, on the road up the Silla at that height the ocean lies immediately at his feet, and he looks down upon it as from a tower. So perpendicular is the face of the Silla towards the sea, that any large *boulder* or mass of rock becoming detached high up the mountain and bounding down its face, would fall clean into the ocean. About half way up the mountain, we crossed a deep cleft in the mountain called the Salto—a jump—on rather a rickety old draw-bridge. The bridge is commanded by a ruinous old town, called Torre Quemada, or the Burnt Tower, a name it derives from its being placed just at the height where the traveller, descending to La Guaira, first encounters the stifling exhalations from the Tierra Caliente. About nine o'clock we stopped to breakfast at La Venta, an inn some five thousand feet above La Guaira. Here, in a perfectly European atmosphere, we lay out in the grass, and gazed down upon the ocean and the town of La Guaira; we could just distinguish the *Ariel*, looking the size of a walnut-shell, hoisting her white sail, and standing away for Porto Cabello, where we were to meet her, unless we returned to Trinidad *via* the Rio Apure and the Orinoco."

Both sides of the road are lined with *Maguey* plants, or varieties of the Agave genus, improperly called *aloes* and *century-plants*, from a mistaken notion that they only blossom once in a hundred years. The most beautiful of these is the *cocuy*, with thick glossy leaves of a clear emerald color, from

six to eight feet, and a flower-stock from twenty-five to thirty feet in length. I believe it is the same species that yields the famous beverage of the Mexicans, called pulque, which some compare to fermented animal juices. A much more agreeable drink is obtained here by distillation from this plant, and its leaves turned to better account by scraping out the fine fibres they contain, from which most beautiful hammocks are made in various parts of the country, besides ropes, coffee-bags, twine, etc., etc. A fortune is in store for some Yankee genius who will invent the proper machine for dressing these leaves and getting the fibres. The other varieties are the *cocuiza brava*, or common century-plant (Agavė Americana), with serrated leaves, on which account it is very useful for making hedges, and the *cocuiza dulce*, with perfectly smooth leaves, containing the strongest fibres and usually cultivated for that purpose. The pith of the flower-stock is also turned to account in various ways, especially for making the best kind of razor-strops.

Were you as much a lover of plants as I am, I would invite you to descend with me to one of those lovely glens formed by these mountains. There, amid moss-covered rocks and sparkling rivulets, I would point out to you those singular orchidaceous plants usually called air-plants, because they obtain their nourishment from the moist air that surrounds them, —not a bad idea,—those lovely daughters of Flora and Favonius, so rich in perfume as well as color, but whose principal charm consists in their caricaturing most living objects in nature, from the "human form divine," as in *man-orchis* (O. mascula) to the bumble-bee, often deceived by a perfect

representation of his species (Ophris apifera). Thus we count among our floral treasures "angels," "swans," "doves," "eagles," "pelicans," "spiders," "butterflies," "bumble-bees," and even a perfect infant in its cradle, was found by Linden in the mountains of Merida. The celebrated *Flor del Espiritu Santo* (Peristeria elata) is another of this class. It is there only that are found those two most beautiful species of cattleya (C. Mossiæ and C. Labiata), so highly prized by plant collectors, from all nations, and here called *Flor de Mayo*, or May-flower, because it blossoms principally in the month of May. Great favorites are they with us also, and no court-yard is deemed sufficiently ornamented at Caracas without one or more *baskets* of these lovely plants, the stump of a tree, or any rustic basket filled with bark or moss, being sufficient support for them. In the same manner the curious Butterfly-flower (Oncidium papillio) is raised along with the others, often deceiving persons unacquainted with it, with a perfect representation of the insect whose name it bears; and if you should visit with me some of the *cacao* plantations in the tierra caliente, I would point out to you two equally exquisite plants of the same family attached to the rough stems and branches of the Erythrina, namely, the Swan-flower (Cycnoches ventricosum) and the Vanilla, both filling the air with the same perfume, but in different form, the former through its swan-like flowers, in clusters of three, five, and even seven, and the latter through its ripened pods—so well known to perfumers and confectioners—as the blossoms of this last, though quite large and handsome, are destitute of perfume.

But to return to our mountain ride, for it is time that we should be prepared to behold a still more glorious view from the summit, than the one just described by Sullivan: "After a regular Spanish breakfast of chocolate and fried eggs, for which, in as regular Spanish custom, we were charged about ten times the proper amount, we continued our ascent, and gained the seat of the Saddle, a hollow between the two peaks, called the Pummel and Croup,* about ten o'clock. The summit of the pass called Las Vueltas, is a smooth undulating grass-land, somewhat like the sheep-downs of Sussex. The bold rocky peaks on either hand, stretching in a serrated ridge as far as the eye could reach, were very fine. I could scarcely fancy myself to be only ten degrees north of the equator, and actually on or rather only eight thousand feet above the isothermal line of greatest heat, which passes through Cartagena, La Guaira, and Cumana.

"We had left far below us all the tropical flora, and were amongst English ferns and English blackberries; and I actually discovered one familiar friend, a dandelion. From the summit of Las Vueltas, you first get a magnificent view of the valley of Chacao, lying some four thousand feet below you, with the city of Caracas in the centre of it. I don't think the view from that height is so fine as some thousand feet lower down, where it certainly beats any view I have ever seen. It is finer in my opinion than the first *coup d'œil* of the Vega and city of Granada

* The writer is mistaken; the Saddle stands four or five miles east of this point, which is called *La Cumbre*, or the Summit.

from the Ultimo Suspiro del Moro, where the degenerate Boabdil el Chico, both in mind and body, turned to take one last fond look at the luxurious abode of his chivalric ancestors and wept bitterly, though too late, at his own cowardice and duplicity, which had almost without a blow surrendered to the "curs of Nazareth" the splendid heritage of nearly seven centuries, and which was never but in imagination to return to the true sons of the Prophet. It is also finer than the Valley of Chamouni or Martigny, from the Tête Noire, but I think it bears more resemblance to the Vega of Granada."

Observe how regularly laid out, at right angles to each other, the streets are; the area of the city is great for the number of inhabitants (sixty thousand), most of the houses being built one story high, and occupying in consequence a large space, on account of the earthquakes, which are of frequent occurrence all along the Andean range. As we approach the suburbs, you may notice some of the ruins still remaining of that dreadful catastrophe, which, in 1812, levelled this beautiful city to the ground, burying beneath the *débris* twelve thousand of the inhabitants, just as they had assembled in the magnificent churches of that time to render homage to the day, Holy Thursday. Since then the city has been rebuilt, it is to be hoped on more solid basis.

Caracas claims the honor of having given birth to several distinguished individuals, among others to Bolivar and Miranda, two of the greatest champions of South American independence; to Rosio, the Jefferson of Vene-

zuela; to Andres Bello, a great poet and publicist; and to the eminent surgeon and physician, Dr. Vargas, one of the Presidents of the Republic.

The climate of Caracas has often been called a perpetual spring. "What can we conceive to be more delightful than a temperature which in the day keeps between 20° and 26°,* and at night between 16° and 18°, which is equally favorable to the plantain, the orange tree, the coffee tree, the apple, the apricot, and corn? José de Oviedo y Baños, the historiographer of Venezuela, calls the situation of Caracas that of a terrestrial paradise, and compares the Anauco and the neighboring torrents to the four rivers of the Garden of Eden." †

The hotels, Sullivan describes as being as good as any in Europe. "You might travel from one end of Old Spain to the other without finding anything to be compared to them, either as regards cleanliness or the civility of the landlords." But as here I am *at home*, you are most cordially invited to our mansion at the end of the Calle del Comercio, where you may verify for yourself the truth of the statements concerning the climate and productions of this fertile valley. We may at once enter the garden, which occupies nearly the whole square, where, after our rough ride, we can refresh ourselves with the fruits of the season.

Here, as you perceive, you find growing side by side the refreshing orange and the luscious apple, the pome-

* Centigrade thermom. † Humboldt—Travels.

68°-78.8° 60.8°-66.4°

granate and the peach; the banana, the citron, the guava, the sapodilla, and papaw tree, all of them eminently tropical fruits, with the pear, the grape-vine, and other productions of temperate regions. Unsurpassed by any, not even by the famous Mangosteen of the Spicy Islands, you have here the delicious Chirimoya, or cherimoyer, as pronounced by Anglo-Saxons, and which I can only liken to lumps of flavored cream ready to be frozen, suspended from the branches of some fairy tree amidst the most overpowering perfume of its flowers; for it is in bearing all the year round, as indeed are most of the fruit trees you see about this garden, and consequently you may at all times enjoy the advantage of refreshing the inner as well as the outer man with a "wilderness of sweets." Markham,* who has tasted both the chirimoya and mangosteen in their native habitat, gives the preference decidedly to the former, and says of it: "He who has not tasted the chirimoya fruit has yet to learn what fruit is." "The pineapple, the mangosteen and the chirimoya," says Dr. Seeman, "are considered the finest fruits in the world. I have tasted them in those localities in which they are supposed to attain their highest perfection—the pineapple in Guayaquil, the mangosteen in the Indian Archipelago, and the chirimoya on the slope of the Andes, and if I were called upon to act the part of a Paris, I would without hesitation assign the apple to the chirimoya. Its taste indeed surpasses that of every other fruit, and Haenke was quite right when he called it the masterpiece of nature."

* Travels in Peru and India.

The numerous varieties of hot-house grapes, which in your variable climate of the north require so much skill and attention to perfect their growth, here thrive without the least care, and the vines which you see struggling here and there among the trees for some kind of support, proceed from *cuttings* which I brought over six years ago from one of the best regulated establishments in Connecticut.

Here, too, the stately Mauritia-palm of the Orinoco, the date-palm of the burning Sahara, the royal-palm of Cuba (Oredoxa Regia), and the oil-palm of Africa (Elcis guinensis) commingle their majestic crowns with the dense foliage of the mango tree of India, the aromatic cinnamon tree of Ceylon, the bread-fruit tree of Otaheite, and the sombre pines and cypress of northern regions, forming the most effective protection to the shade-loving magnolia and the delicate violet of your native woods.

Swarms of tiny and brilliant humming-birds flutter amid masses of highly-scented orange blossoms that perfume the air around us. Any one unacquainted with that *bijou* of the feathered tribe, would mistake it at first sight for some of the metallic-colored beetles which dispute with them the nectar of the fragrant flowers, so brilliant is the lustre shed by both. "For that peculiar charm which resides in flashing light combined with the most brilliant colors, the lustre of precious stones, there are no birds, no creatures that can compare with the humming-birds. Confined exclusively to America—whence we have already gathered between three and four hundred distinct species, and more are continually discovered—these lovely little

winged gems were to the Mexican and Peruvian Indians the very quintessence of beauty. By these simple people they were called by various names, signifying 'the rays of the sun,' 'the tresses of the day-star,' and the like." *

You may have noticed in your conservatories at home a well known creeper called the passion-flower, on account of a fancied similarity in the arrangement of its inflor escence with the instruments of torture employed in the martyrdom of the Saviour, such as the crown of thorns, the three nails, the hammer, and even the spots of sacred blood round the pillar of agony. The plants of this genus are general favorites with northern horticulturists only on account of the beauty and delicious aroma of their flowers, for they bear no fruit with you; but here, this constitutes their principal merit, especially that of the *granadilla*, which you may perceive intertwining its graceful vines amongst yonder arbor set up for its support. Huge water-melon-like fruits hang from its delicate tendrils as if suspended by a thread; cut open one of them; you will find it filled with a nectarian juice, which, when crushed in the mouth, regale your palate with the compound flavor of the strawberry and the peach. Other varieties of passion-flower—of which there are many though less pretentious in size than the granadilla—bear fruit equally rich in flavor. Unfortunately, not all fructify in the same locality, as they require different degrees of temperature, and maybe of atmospheric pressure, also, to ripen their fruit, which they cunningly obtain for themselves by "squatting"

* Gosse's "Romance of Natural History."

of their own accord higher up or lower down the mountains, as the case may be.

I could still point out to you many other delicious fruits in this garden were they in season, such as the *tuna* or Indian-fig, borne by the nopal, a species of cactus, on the fleshy, downy stems of which the cochineal insect is reared for those most valuable crimson and scarlet dyes "which far outshine the vaunted productions of ancient Tyre;" and the *pitahaya*, of the same family of plants, notable for the size and effulgence of its flowers. "It begins to open as the sun declines, and is in full expanse throughout the night, shedding a delicious fragrance, and offering its brimming goblet, filled with nectarious juice, to thousands of moths, and other crepuscular and nocturnal insects. When the moon is at the full in those cloudless nights whose loveliness is only known in the tropics, the broad blossom is seen as a circular dish nearly a foot in diameter, very full of petals, of which the outer series are of a yellowish hue, gradually paling to the centre, where they shine in the purest white. The numerous recumbent stamens surround the style, which rises in the midst like a polished shaft, the whole growing in its silvery beauty under the moonbeams, from the dark and matted foliage, and diffusing its delicious clove-like fragrance so profusely that the air is loaded with it for furlongs round."*

I well remember one night when a distinguished foreigner, General Devereux, who rendered the patriot cause so marked a service by bringing over the Irish Legion to

* Romance of Natural History.

assist this country in her struggle for independence, honored me with a visit while keeping bachelor's hall in this—to me then—earthly paradise. The Queen of Night was shining in all her glory, and the air redolent with the perfume of many exquisite flowers, among others that of the pitahaya just described, while the stillness that reigned around the spot, added to my youthful dreams of fairy lands I had lately visited across the seas, made me feel a particular pride about our mansion in the capital. Although the old hero was perfectly blind—as will be recollected by many who knew him in the United States where he resided afterwards—I could not resist the wish to invite him to take a stroll about the garden. As we passed close to the flowers of the pitahaya, the gallant old soldier stopped suddenly, and seizing me by the hand with an emotion that made me feel the deepest sympathy for the blind man, said: "How happy you must be here, my young friend, surrounded as you are by plants that shed such heavenly perfume!" But when we passed a bower of English honeysuckles, which was my special favorite, as I had planted it with my own hands, his emotions were indeed those of a man who felt as though everything on earth was lost to him—sweet home, friendly associations, the world itself in fact, and that he was only a wandering spirit in a strange sphere.

This, my good companion, reminds me too that such, more or less, is my own situation in this my native land, subject as it has been for years to political convulsions more disastrous to the peacefully inclined, than those subterranean fires which agitate the soil from time to time. Therefore

our rambles in the capital must be of short duration, and following the rout already pointed out by the traveller Sullivan, we will proceed on our journey towards the fertile valley of Aragua, stopping for the night at Las Adjuntas, a village delightfully situated at the foot of another lofty range of mountains which separates this from that of Caracas, near the junction of two mountain streams that form the Rio Guaire which passes near the capital.

Should you ever be troubled with nervousness or dyspepsia from too close application to business, or even be threatened with that more serious complaint of cold climates, consumption, don't let your Doctor bother you with physic, nor delude yourself with a trip "down South," Cuba, or even Europe; all this may at best prolong a miserable existence a little longer; instead of that, come here at once; bring plenty of books to while away the *dolce far niente* of this quiet place; or if you are a sportsman, your gun and fishing tackle; when sufficiently convalescent to undergo the fatigues of the journey, buy or hire horses for yourself and a good *peon* or guide, and start for the *llanos*, where you will have to rough it out as I did some years ago, and I guarantee you a radical cure.

At Las Adjuntas we have the choice of two roads, one for carriages, made at great cost since Sullivan's visit to the country, and the other one right over the mountains; as this is by far the most picturesque of the two and the one described by him, we will follow on his footsteps, if you wish to enjoy the glorious scenery, of which he says;

"Next morning, at 3 A. M., our faithful mozo roused us,

—at San Pedro—and we found our mules already saddled. The morning was very cold, and a cloak was by no means disagreeable. As far as I could make out by the light of a most glorious moon, San Pedro must be a very picturesque and flourishing village. We continued ascending through a thickly-wooded, mountainous path, for about three hours, when we found ourselves along the summit of the mountain, here called Las Cocuizas. Here the scenery was truly magnificent. The road wound along the summit of the Sierra, giving alternate views of the valley of the Tuy, with the distant valley of Aragua on the one hand, and the valley of Ocumare bounded the snow-capped mountains that separate the valleys from the plains on the other. Out of the main valleys narrow little glens wind, and nestle up into the mountains, till lost to view. Their rounded sides, and the emerald brilliancy of nature's carpet with which they were clothed, reminded me of some of the glens of the Cheviots.

"That morning's moonlight ride along the summits of the sierra of Las Cocuizas was certainly one of the most enjoyable I ever remember. It was almost like magic, when as the sun began to approach the horizon, the perfect stillness of the forests beneath was gradually broken by the occasional note of some early riser of the winged inhabitants, till at length, as the day itself began to break, the whole forest seemed to be suddenly warmed into life, sending forth choir after choir of gorgeous-plumaged songsters, each after his own manner, to swell the chorus of greeting —a discordant one, I fear it must be owned—to the glorious sun; and when the morning light enabled you to see down

into the misty valleys beneath, there were displayed to our enchanted gaze zones of fertility embracing almost every species of tree and flower that flourishes between the Tierra Caliente and the regions of perpetual snow. It certainly was a view of almost unequalled magnificence. We were riding amongst apple and peach trees that might have belonged to an English orchard, and on whose branches we almost expected to see the blackbird and the chaffinch; while a few hundred yards below, parrots and macaws, monkeys and mocking-birds were sporting among the palms and tree-ferns of a tropical climate. I consider that this view alone would repay any lover of fine scenery for all the troubles and risks of crossing the Atlantic, for I do not know where one to be compared with it is to be found in Europe."

This mountain takes the name of Las Cocuizas from the abundance of Agave plants growing here, and which impart such peculiar aspect to the landscape as we descend towards the bed of the Tuy, at the foot of the mountain. Here we must stop to breakfast and pass the sun before we proceed on our journey along the Tierra Caliente not far from our resting-place.

"We found the pretty village of Las Cocuizas," proceeds Sullivan, "situated at the entrance of a delicious little glen, down which warbled the waters of the Tuy. The *Venta*, in fact nearly the whole village was shaded by one enormous saman-tree,* which to the dusty and wearied traveller gave it a most enticing appearance; neither did it disappoint our

* A species of Mimosa.

expectations, for a cleaner room and a better breakfast better cooked and better served, I never wish to taste. This venta at Las Cocuizas is most enchantingly situated at the foot of the mountain and at the entrance of the valley of the Tuy, which is there a mere glen; one side is entirely shaded by this enormous tree, and the other overhanging the Tuy, which with its rocky bed and thickly-wooded, precipitous banks, reminded one very much of some of the tributaries of the Tweed. The venta would be a charming place to stay at for a few days' angling in the Tuy, which I believe is very good."

After leaving the venta of Las Cocuizas, we wade through the waters of the Tuy—no bridge being provided here—and proceed along a well graded road for carts and carriages skirting the base of another ridge of mountains until we reach the village of El Consejo, where the great valley of Aragua, seventy miles in length, properly commences. And now we are in the great coffee region, "the garden of Venezuela" as it is very aptly called by common accord. As we ride towards the town of La Victoria, where we shall stop for the night, we pass several extensive plantations of that delicious shrub, shaded like the cacao by those stupendous erythrinas which you might mistake for a primeval forest, were it not for the uniformity of their growth and dazzling blossoms. Nothing in your vaunted system of cultivation in the North can excel the care bestowed upon these plantations, which must be kept in the best order to yield handsome returns; but as we cannot stop to visit one of these just now, you will permit me to

repeat what the traveller often quoted before, says in regard to the region we are traversing :

"The valleys of Aragua are the most thickly populated and the most highly cultivated of all the districts of Venezuela. The level of the valley is two thousand feet below the valley of Caracas, consequently the heat much more intense. Coffee is now the chief article of exportation from Venezuela, the fluctuating price of which has of late years been very injurious to the country. The berry grown is of a superior quality, and fetches a much better price than the Cuban or Brazilian coffee, though not quite so high as that grown in Jamaica. Some of the coffee and sugar estates we passed were on the largest scale, employing as many as two hundred slaves,* besides the same number of laborers. A coffee plantation, either in blossom or when the berry is ripe, is the most beautiful culture in the world. The plant itself, with its regular shoots like a miniature tree, and red berries, is one of the most graceful shrubs I know ; and as between the rows of coffee-trees they usually plant plantains and bananas, these with their enormous clusters of yellow fruits and their leaves of some six or eight feet in length, add greatly to the effect, and give the country the appearance of a large fruit garden. Moreover, as it is necessary to plant the mango, and other large fast-growing trees, to protect the ripening berry from the deluging rains and scorching heats, whenever you pass a coffee plantation, even in the hottest day in the midst of summer, when the whole face of the country is parched up and of an unhealthy brown

* Slavery has since been abolished in Venezuela.

color, the eye is continually refreshed by the cool, verdant appearance of these shaded gardens."

I may add that the coffee of Venezuela is of various qualities, according to whether it is raised in Tierra Caliente or Tierra Fria, *id est*, coffee of the low, warm valleys, or coffee of mountainous districts; this last is superior to the former, and bears in consequence the highest price in the market. Again, *café trillado*, and *café descerezado*, which means coffee dried in the berry as it is gathered, and husked afterwards by a tread-mill composed of a heavy wooden wheel revolving in a circular trough of masonry; and coffee deprived at once of its pulpy covering by machinery as soon as it is picked, dried afterwards in the sun upon extensive platforms of masonry called *patios*, and passed through different sets of machinery to deprive the grain or bean of the adhering shell and pellicle. The coffee thus prepared is superior in quality to that which is *trillado* for want of means on the part of the planter to put up the expensive works required for this operation, and therefore bears a higher price.

Interspersed with these plantations are others of no less importance to the industry of these valleys, such as indigo, cotton, indian-corn, wheat and tobacco, all of them requiring the same share of careful cultivation and intelligent management. "The road we were following," continues Sullivan, "was so well kept and so well wooded, and the hedges so neatly clipped, that I could hardly sometimes help fancying myself riding down some country lanes in England. We followed one lime hedge, which enclosed a coffee plantation,

for upwards of two miles. It was the most perfectly kept hedge I had seen in any country; it was four or five feet high and about three feet thick, and throughout its whole length, I don't believe there was a single flaw through which a dog could have forced its way. Several slaves were employed in trimming it. In fact, in this climate, where the growth of all inanimate nature is unceasing, and so rapid, it must employ several hands continually to keep it in such beautiful order. The scent of the lime as we approached it from some parched country we had been crossing previously, was most delicious."

As there is nothing to interest us in the towns along this route, we will pass by San Mateo, La Victoria and Turmero, all of them pleasantly surrounded by plantations, until we reach Maracay, the point of our destination. On our way thither, we come up with that giant of the vegetable world, the Saman de Güere, so well described by Humboldt in his Travels, and subsequently by Sullivan. As their statements are corroborative of the facts given elsewhere by me respecting these enormous but most graceful mimosas, I will here use the language of the last mentioned traveller about that of the hacienda de Güere.

"Soon after leaving Turmero we caught sight of the far-famed Saman de Güere, and in about an hour's time arrived at the hamlet of Güere, from whence it takes its name. It is supposed to be the oldest tree in the world, for so great was the reverence of the Indians for it on account of its age at the time of the Spanish conquest, that the Government issued a decree for its protection from all injury, and it has

ever since been public property. It shows no sign whatever of decay, but it is as fresh and green as it was most probably a thousand years ago. The trunk of this magnificent tree is only sixty feet high by thirty feet in circumference, so that it is not so much the enormous size of the Saman de Güere that constitutes its great attraction, as the wonderful spread of its magnificent branches, and the perfect dome-like shape of its head, which is so exact and regular, that one could almost fancy some extinct race of giants had been exercising their topiarian art upon it. The circumference of this dome is said to be nearly six hundred feet, and the measure of its semicircular head very nearly as great. The saman is a species of mimosa, and what is curious and adds greatly to its beauty and softness is, that the leaves of this giant of nature are as small and delicate as those of the silver willow, and are equally as sensitive to every passing breeze."

And now for the most picturesque of all the towns on our long ride, Maracay, not on account of any architectural display about its buildings, for it has no pretensions of this kind, but for its many gardens, each house being literally embowered in the choicest productions of the tropics in the way of fruits, such as orange, lime and lemon trees, both sweet and sour; caimito or star-apple, a creamy and luscious fruit growing upon one of the most beautiful trees with which I am acquainted; the same might be said of two other fruit-trees cultivated in these gardens, the *mamon* and *cotopriz*, both bearing great bunches of an oval fruit the size of a pigeon's egg, olive-green in the former,

and bright yellow in the latter, containing a kernel enveloped in a sweet, sub-acid pulp; bread-fruit trees of two kinds and accordingly distinguished as *fruta de pan* and *pan de palo*, bread-fruit and bread-tree—the former being a large pulpy and greenish fruit very like an Osage orange but larger, containing great numbers of chestnut-like seeds, which roasted or boiled taste very much like bread, and the latter a fruit precisely like its congener in appearance, but destitute of seeds, which assimilates it still more to the "staff of life" when boiled or baked, for it is beautifully white and compact inside.

In addition to the foregoing, these gardens offer you a fine display of other tropical trees no less esteemed for their grateful shade and their delicious fruits, such as sapotes and sapodillas, both elegant in form as well as in bearing; and so is also the splendid mamey apple-tree (mamea Americana) bearing great quantities of large, round and heavy fruits, brown outside, and golden-yellow within, from which marmalades and other delicacies are made by the charming Maracayeras.

The family to which the famous chirimoya belongs (anonaciæ) have also three other representatives hardly inferior to that "master-piece of nature," viz.; the *guanábana* (anona muricata) or sour-sop—an ugly name in English for such fine fruit—from which a most cooling drink is made, and still finer ices; the custard-apple, which needs no further explanation than its name to recommend it; and the *riñon*, (anona squamosa) also a custardy kindney-like fruit, hence its name.

Butter being expensive, and difficult to keep in this climate, nature has provided a substitute for it in the fruit of the fine tree (Persea gratissima), consecrated, as the name implies, to Perseus, the son of Jupiter and Danaë; thus showing the wisdom of the botanist over the less cultivated English settlers of the Caribean islands, who call it *alligator-pear*, I presume, from the fact of its being indigenous to a country abounding in saurian reptiles, although I am of opinion that a creature of this sort would rather prefer a more substantial morsel in the shape of a fat Briton, to a fruit which is well adapted to the taste of demigods. In shape it resembles a large pear, but the interior of its rind is lined with a marrow-like substance of a yellowish color, which assimilates very nearly to butter, the place of which it supplies at the breakfast-table. It is, in fact, vegetable-butter, and many prefer it to the ordinary kind.

The extensive family of leguminous or pod-bearing trees also grace these gardens with three additional members remarkable for fine foliage and useful products, such as the *algarroba*, with hard-shelled pods, containing a number of brown, round seeds or beans—also very hard, enveloped in a farinaceous and very nutricious fecula; a fine aromatic resin, good for varnishes, exudes from the trunk and branches of this tree, and a still finer one can be extracted from its horny pericarp by infusion in alcohol or other extractive medium; *guamos* (Inga) of various kinds, with pellucid pods one and two feet in length, containing a row of beans enveloped in white, cottony pulp, most grate-

ful to the taste; and the unrivalled tamarind, either as regards beauty of foliage, brilliancy of blossoms, or the delicacy of its acidulous pulpy pods; these are candied either in a green state or when fully ripe, affording in the latter case a most refreshing drink to the fever-stricken in this climate, when made into a decoction. In blossom, the tamarind-tree is one of the most charming objects to behold, for amid its feathery, dark-green foliage, somewhat similar to that of the hemlock, issues a profusion of golden-yellow branches of delicate flowers, almost dazzling to the eyes.

The coco-palm, although far away from the sea-coast, its native habitat, also flourishes in great perfection, contributing not a little to the splendor of the vegetation in these truly tropical gardens, with its glorious crown of monster leaves. And last, though not least, the plantain and banana claim here the supremacy which everyone accords them over all productions of the tropics. A few plants of each only are sufficient to supply a whole family with bread, vegetables, fruit, and preserves of various kinds. "We might be surprised," observes Humboldt, "at the small extent of these cultivated spots, if we did not recollect that an acre planted with plantains produces nearly twenty times as much food as the same space sown with corn. In Europe, our wheat, barley, and rye cover vast spaces of ground; and in general the arable lands touch each other whenever the inhabitants live upon corn. It is different under the torrid zone, where man obtains food from plants which yield more abundant and earlier harvests. In those favored climates the fertility of the soil is proportioned to

the heat and humidity of the atmosphere. An immense population finds abundant nourishment within a narrow space covered with plantains, casava, yams, and maize." *

Well has the immortal bard of the Torrid Zone † sung the marvellous exuberance of this plant in the following lines, which I regret to be unable to translate.

Y para tí el banano,
Desmaya al peso de su dulce carga.
El banano, primero
De cuantos concedió bellos presentes
Providencia á las gentes
Del Ecuador feliz con mano larga;
No ya de humanas artes obligado
El premio rinde opimo;
No es á la podadera, no al arado,
Deudor de su racimo.
Escasa industria bástale cual puede
Robar á sus fatigas mano esclava;
Crece veloz, y cuando exhausto acaba,
Adulta prole en torno le sucede."

Silva á la Zona Tórrida.

Water being abundant throughout these gardens by the provident care of the inhabitants in bringing it in flowing streams from a great distance, they present at all times of the year, even during the driest months of summer, the perpetual spring-like verdure which constitutes their principal charm. Not far from here is the fine lake of Tacarigua or

* "Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America."

† Andres Bello.

Valencia, which by its gradual but marked evaporation, is constantly adding to the already extensive area of fertile land nowhere to be found like it in the wide world, and which doubtless extorted, even from an Englishman, the following confession:

"It is a great pity Venezuela is so much out of the high roads of travel, and that the inconveniences, for Europeans, of getting at it, are so great. It is, in my opinion, the most beautiful country, as regards climate, scenery, and productions, in the world. The inhabitants are intelligent, civil, and honest; and although there is no excessive wealth in the country, there is, on the other hand, no great poverty, and actual want is unknown, where beef can be procured to any amount for a half penny a pound, and plantains and bananas almost for nothing. The inns are excellent, and travelling perfectly safe. You may, on the sides of its precipitous valleys, in a few hours, ascend from the productions of the torrid zone to those of the frigid. You may, if you like, dine off beefsteak and potatoes, cooled down with French claret or real London stout; or, if you prefer it, you may, in imitation of Leo X. and the Emperor Vitellius, feast your guests on joints of monkey and jaguar, and have your *entremêts* of parrots' tongues and humming-birds' breasts washed down with sparkling pulque, tapped from the graceful maguey growing at your very door. In fact, there is no luxury you cannot enjoy at a moderate expense. Servants are cheap; and you can buy a horse for five shillings, though it will cost you fifteen to have him shod! The shooting on the *llanos* and in the mountains,

according to all accounts, is very grand. The woods are filled with jaguar and ocelot, to say nothing of snakes, and the plains with deer and wild cattle.

"If any kind fairy were to offer me the sovereignty of any part of the world out of Europe, with power to rule it as I choose, my choice would certainly fall on Venezuela. I am fully convinced it only *wants a government strong and stable enough to ensure the necessary protection to capital and property*, to render it one of the most flourishing countries in the world. I look back upon the few weeks I spent there as amongst the most enjoyable I ever passed; and if ever any opportunity was to offer of revisiting that delicious country, I should do so with pleasure. Any traveller, wishing to judge for himself, has only to go by the West India steamer to St. Thomas, where he meets the sailing-packet for La Guaira, which he reaches in four or five days; and with a few letters of introduction, or even without any, hospitality will meet him on all hands, and he will never feel a moment hang heavy on his hands." *

And now, seated under the refreshing foliage of these paradisaical gardens, rather than expose you to the dangers of a demi-savage country, I will recount to you the adventures of a former journey, and the peculiarities of a still more wonderful region.

* Sullivan.—Rambles and Scrambles in North and South America.

TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEPARTURE.

"Y greyes van sin cuento
Paciendo tu verdura desde el llano
Que tiene por lindero el horizonte,
Hasta el erguido monte
De inaccesible nieve siempre cano."

ANDRES BELLO, *Silva á la Zona Tórrida.*

ON a fine morning of a tropical December month, a jolly cavalcade, or rather a heterogeneous assemblage from the various castes composing the bulk of the population in the Venezuelian Republic, was to be seen traversing the streets of the beautiful town of Maracay, in the direction of the road leading to the *Llanos* or Pampas of Apure, a region widely celebrated for its wildness, its dangers, and the many exploits enacted therein. There the father of the writer owned extensive cattle-farms, and the aforesaid company proposed spending the remainder of the summer season in hunting among the untamed herds constituting the wealth and commerce of that wild region.

I shall never forget the exciting scenes of that eventful day; it forms one of the most pleasing episodes of my life. Full well do I remember also the picturesqueness of the variegated costumes of the

riders; their red and blue ponchos flowing in the wind as they cantered to and fro through the unusually animated streets of the little town, taking leave of their friends, and provisioning their saddle-bags with the necessaries they required; the trampling and neighing of horses; the parting adieux and waving of handkerchiefs in the hands of lively brunettes, as we defiled under the windows and balconies of the Calle Real, crowded with anxious relatives, friends, and sweethearts of many a gallant cavalier, who might never return from his distant and perilous journey. For my part, I confess, that although for sundry reasons I regretted departing from our romantic abode in the valleys of Aragua, still, so great was my desire to visit the land of the wild bull and crocodile, that for several nights before leaving home I dreamed of nothing but wild scenes and terrible encounters with the lords of the savannas.

The method of conducting a South American cattle farm is entirely different from that usually practised among the more peaceful scenes of the North American prairies. Here the cattle, accustomed from their birth to the friendly voice of man, readily obey his commands and follow him instinctively wherever he leads them. In the plains of South America, on the contrary, the herds hear no other than the voice of Nature in her sublimest moods, in the thunders of the storm, and when in her vernal showers she calls upon the crocodiles and other drowsy reptiles, awakening them from their periodical summer's lethargy; and nightly the roar and screams of savage beasts answering each other in

the darkness. The cattle, thus roaming over extensive plains, and free of all restraint, necessarily require to be occasionally collected together for the purpose of branding and marking the young calves, which increase there with astonishing rapidity. If this precaution were neglected, they would in time become so dispersed over those boundless plains, as to be altogether irreclaimable. This operation cannot be accomplished, however, without a great number of men and horses, both well trained to and thoroughly acquainted with this demi-savage occupation. Therefore we mustered now quite a little army of *Llaneros*, or natives of the Llanos, who are the only individuals capable of prosecuting and successfully performing the arduous duties appertaining to these cattle forays.

Our retinue presented pretty much the appearance of an oriental caravan; it consisted of more than a hundred individuals of all grades and colors; from the bright, rubicund faces of merry England's sons, to the jetty phiz of the native African, all of whom, notwithstanding, fraternized as though sprung from the same race.

Our company, moreover, had been organized as if for a military campaign, and formed the nucleus of a more extensive camp, to be increased by additions from different places along the route. The leader—General Paez—besides having acquired in early life a practical knowledge of this peculiar warfare, possessed in addition the rare gift of being—in the opinion of many—"the first rider in South America,"

and withal the most accomplished Llanero in the Republic. His dispositions were accordingly made in a manner most likely to insure success in this strange campaign; passing in review every person and every object, with as scrupulous care as he bestowed upon the legions under his command in the long strife for his country's freedom; distributing each particular horse with reference to the skill and special duties of his rider, and every load according to the strength of each beast of burden.

Next in importance to the Leader was a Surgeon and Physician, whose valuable services were to be frequently called into requisition. Although we were not now to encounter powder and ball, we had to deal with no less dangerous enemies in the form of wild bulls, snakes, and crocodiles, without reckoning the pestiferous marshes of the country.

After our Surgeon came the Treasurer; his duty was to conduct safely the military chest of the expedition, consisting of sundry bags of hard dollars, ponchos, checkered linen handkerchiefs of the peculiar pattern worn with so much pride by Llaneros on the head, knives, sword blades, and various other articles of barter which they prize more than money itself, and for the attainment of which they labor hard and even expose their lives.

To me was assigned the honorable post of Secretary to the expedition, whose pleasant duty was to keep its records, and at times those of the political "Bulls and Bears" of the country at large. Attached to this office were an English amateur of wild sports, an English artist of considerable merit, and a

few others, who, like myself, not being sufficiently trained to the hard operations of the field, were forced to be content with the tamer occupations of the cattle farm, and only an occasional foray among the smaller game of the savannas.

I will mention two other individuals, who, although filling less exalted positions than the preceding—being the cook and the washerman—were very necessary to our comfort; not that we felt over-scrupulous with regard to the dressing of either ourselves or that of the savory dishes of the Llanos—where I relished a beafsteak *au naturel* with as much gusto as though prepared by the Delmonicos or Maillards of New York—but an early cup of coffee was a luxury not to be despised, and an occasional scouring of our scanty wardrobe was equally an essential. The cook was a mulatto by birth, whose name—Mónico—bore some similarity to that of the distinguished caterer of William street, and was as great a favorite with us as the latter is among the "down town" gentry of the great city, not only on account of his good nature and skill in the preparation of the delicious beverage before mentioned,

"que en los festines
La fiebre insana templará á Lieo,"

but also for the aid he lent his companions in mending their tattered garments, being as accomplished a tailor and shoemaker as cook. Gaspar, the washerman, was a lame negro rather advanced in years, but with all the vivacity of his race still sparkling in his eyes. He had earned some reputation in his time as a brave soldier during the protracted war of Inde-

pendence, but, disabled now by a bullet and sundry tiger scars, testimonials of his good service in the cause of humanity, could perform no other work than the rather feminine one allotted to him on this occasion. He, however, possessed other accomplishments, among which the chief was that of recounting his adventures in the wars and with the wild beasts of the field, which made him a desirable companion and general favorite.

Poor fellows! they are both dead, and their bones, as well as those of most of that little band of heroes, are now bleaching in the hot sun of the tropics, amid the waving grass of those savannas once rendered famous by their deeds of valor and enlivened by their chivalrous songs. After faithfully following their leader through dangers and hardships no less terrible than those of the battle-field, one by one they fell, not by foe "in battle arrayed," nor the terrible stroke of the wild bull, but by the assassin's treacherous hand, and those of the unprincipled myrmidons of military misrule; not because of their political influence in the councils of the Nation, but for being the faithful followers of their beloved Chieftain.

The reader has now been introduced to those constituting the Staff of the expedition; but in addition a host of attendants and idlers formed the rank and file of this motley assemblage. Each one of these had a special duty to perform. Some were *asistentes*, or the personal attendants of the former, as no *blanco* ventures to travel in the Llanos without some *cicerone* of the country to guide him over the trackless wastes, to saddle his horse, and see that both horse and rider

are comfortably quartered for the night. Others were appointed to conduct the beasts of burden, of which there were a formidable array; while the most experienced riders were intrusted with the care and guidance of our *madrina*, or pack of supernumerary horses, which formed by far the most efficient element of our expedition.

Our drove consisted of about two hundred spirited chargers, as swift and slim as any that ever tramped the hot sands of Yemen or the Sahara; these were to be reinforced with fresh relays from the cattle farms, to supply the place of those which might be carried off from various causes during those exciting hunts.

The only method of travelling as yet adopted in the country is on horseback. This is at first somewhat fatiguing to those unaccustomed to long journeys; but the traveller soon becomes inured to it, and ends by preferring it to any other, on account of the exhilarating sensation of independence he experiences; at all events, it is the most convenient that can be adopted in a country which, like the Pampas, is subject to vast inundations, and overgrown in all its extent by the rank herbage of the savannas. On the mountains, mules are usually preferred for their surefootedness, as also for their astonishing endurance of hunger and fatigue; but in the Pampas, where journeys must be accomplished with great expedition and rapidity, they are comparatively worthless from the shortness of their gait, and also because their hoofs become softened by the marshy soil which everywhere prevails, they being never shod, owing to a mistaken notion of the riders, who believe that by so doing the sure-

footedness of the animal is impaired. The best horses, consequently, had been selected on this occasion, but were not to be saddled until we reached the Llanos. These were all collected into a *madrina* or drove, together with the *vaqueros* or horses destined for the chase, and placed under the charge of half a dozen experienced Llaneros, who were to drive them loose across the country. In the mean time we would perform on mules the first four days of our journey, which lay across the rough and hilly country between the valleys and the plains. As beasts of burden, mules are particularly serviceable; in view of this we had collected a pack of about twenty for the purpose of transporting our loads, consisting partly, as I have observed, of various descriptions of goods for distribution among the Llaneros, in part payment of their wages; but the greater number were laden with our own chattels and provisións; for although the Llanos are justly regarded as a land of plenty, the habitations are yet so widely distant, that it is expedient to provide for all contingencies.

Our road, at times, lay across extensive fields of sugar cane, indigo, and tobacco; or through vast plantations of Erithynas (*bucarales*) raised for the protection of the shade-loving Cacao trees, loaded with the luscious bean that yields its "divine food" * to gods and mortals. At other times, extensive tracks of waste lands (*rastrojos*) overgrown with a luxuriant vegetation, intercepted the line of our march, giving

* Linnæus, in his enthusiasm for the delightful beverage obtained from the cacao bean, named the plant that produces it *theobroma*—food for the gods.

the country a wild and desolate aspect. Land is so cheap and plentiful in Venezuela, that it is always more advantageous for the planter, whenever the land has become exhausted with repeated cultivation, to clear a new patch of ground for his crop, than to trouble himself about restoring to the ground by artificial means what nature will provide in the course of time. The rapidity with which a patch of waste land, that only a year or two before had been abandoned as unserviceable, becomes covered with an exuberant vegetation in the tropics, is quite extraordinary. Hardly have the plough and hoe of the industrious husbandman ceased to harass the land with their incessant toil, when an entirely different crop of indigenous plants, which had been silently struggling for existence, now make their appearance, and change the aspect of the landscape with new forms of vegetation. Insignificant weeds at first, scarcely worth noticing, they soon attain sufficient strength to arrest the progress of any stragglers that might have remained of the plantation. In a short time they have acquired the size and form of well-developed trees, with boughs spreading far above a man on horseback; and before two summers have elapsed, not a vestige remains of what was once a flourishing plantation. An endless variety of creepers, such as convolvulus, bignonias, and passion flowers, now find support among their numerous branches, forming with them the most picturesque bowers and arcades, or hanging by their sides in graceful garlands and festoons of the most exquisite beauty. Our troop of supernumerary horses, as if unwilling to leave behind

these delightful retreats, did not fail to profit by the tangled nature of the cover, frequently eluding the vigilance of the drivers, and dashing forward whenever they saw an opening to decamp. The most skilful management on the part of the drivers was then required to disentangle them from the thick jungle; otherwise we should have arrived at the end of our journey with less than half their number. It was quite amusing to see those reckless fellows gliding here and there through the tangled woods in full pursuit of the refractory animals, now hanging from one leg down the sides of their steeds, or stretched over their necks to avoid being lifted from the saddle by the intervening branches. In spite of all precaution, and the vigilance of their drivers, we missed several valuable hunters in the course of the journey, every one of which made his way back to the *potreros* or old grazing grounds with unerring precision. So remarkable is this peculiarity in horses of one place driven across a strange country, and the cunning they display in effecting their escape, that although we left instructions along the route to secure all deserters, most of those we missed at a considerable distance from Maracay, made their way back across the fields, avoiding in their flight the public roads and populated districts through which we had passed.

Late in the evening we reached San Luis de Cura, a town of some importance on our route. Although we had there many friends of whose hospitality we could have availed ourselves, we preferred passing the night at a *Pulperia*, or country inn, a short distance in advance—hotels being yet unknown in that

part of the country. Our numerous retinue, and especially our horses, accustomed to the unrestrained freedom of the *potrero*—an enclosed field attached to the *Pulperia*—precluded all idea of seeking accommodations within the narrow limits of a city residence. Declining, therefore, all invitations to that effect, we pushed on to a place called El Rodeo, a few miles further.

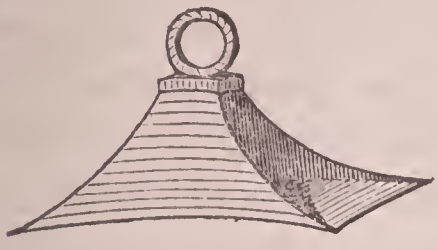
San Luis de Cura—or Villa de Cura, as it is usually called—is a sort of entrepôt to which the people of the Llanos resort from time to time to barter the products of their farms for those of foreign manufacture, retailed there by country traders. It is, in fact, the connecting link between the agricultural and pastoral sections of the republic; hence we find there the strangest admixture of wild and civilized manners and costumes curiously intermingled in all the pursuits and vocations of the people. Thus we often meet with persons of respectability clad in the elegant city dress, and riding a horse entirely caparisoned in the gaudy attire of the Llanos, and *vice versa*.

Our accommodations at the inn were not of the most inviting description, neither its apartments nor the *potrero* affording much comfort to the weary caravan after their long ride. A stony bank on the slope of the barren hill for couch and the broad dome of heaven for roof, with not even posts enough from which to sling our hammocks, was all the hospitality we received at the Pulperia. We slept soundly notwithstanding, softening our beds of pebbles by spreading our ponchos over them, while each man's saddle,

serving at once as pillow and larder, furnished us with supper on this occasion. The llanero saddle is admirably adapted for the rough journeys of the country, and though somewhat ponderous, renders good service to the wandering Llanero in his long peregrinations. These saddles, usually styled *vaqueras*, in allusion to the occupations of the riders, appear to be modelled after the gay accoutrements of the Arabs; the same profusion of silver ornament and bright-colored trimmings of morocco, the high peak in front, and still higher cantle behind. A comfortable *pellon* or shabrack, made either of an entire sheepskin or horse hair dyed black and neatly braided at one end, covers the entire seat, and hangs from it in graceful folds. Numbers of bags and pockets—*bolsas*—made of the same material as the saddle, and in keeping with the rest, are affixed to it for the purpose of stowing away all those little commodities so essential to the traveller on a long journey, such as *papelon*, a sort of brown sugar in cakes resembling maple sugar, cheese, cakes of Indian corn, and *aguardiente*, a beverage equally celebrated for its use and its abuse. The stirrups, which are usually carved from a block of wood, present the peculiarity of being longer and heavier than any ever adopted by equestrians. Although termed *africanos*, they are just the reverse of their cognomens, as can be seen by comparing the subjoined designs.

An expert rider never places his whole foot in the stirrup, as is the case with the Arabs, but holds it with his big toe, so as to disentangle himself readily in case of a fall. This habit gives a crooked shape to

the feet and legs of the rider, which peculiarity entitles him to the credit of being a good horseman.



The carvings on some of these stirrups are very fanciful, and display considerable taste. Their beauty is thought to consist chiefly in the two triangular appendages at the bottom with which they urge on their horses.

The *cobija* or poncho is also a most indispensable commodity on these long journeys; and no traveller should omit providing himself with one, especially during the rainy season. It is fully six feet square, with a hole in the centre to admit the head, and its office is twofold, viz., to protect the rider and his cumbrous equipment from the heavy showers and dews of the tropics, and to spread under him when there is no convenience for slinging the hammock. It also serves as a protection from the scorching rays of the sun, experience having taught its wearer that a thick woollen covering keeps the body moist and cool by day, and warm by night. The poncho used in Venezuela is made double, by sewing together two different blankets, the outside one being dark blue and the inner one bright red, which colors, as is well known, are differently acted upon by light and heat. By exposing alternately the sides of the poncho to

the light according to the state of the weather, those modifications of temperature most agreeable to the body are obtained. Thus, when the day is damp and cloudy, the dark side of the poncho, which absorbs the most heat, is turned towards the light, while the reverse is the case when the red surface is presented to the sun. On the same principle, the *manta*, or white linen poncho, is worn when the sun is very powerful, the color in this instance repelling the rays of light more readily than the red surface of woollen materials. The *manta* is a very expensive luxury on account of the embroideries that usually decorate it, and which might rival in elegance the finest skirt of a New York or Parisian *belle*. When worn by a gallant cavalier on a sunny day, it presents in the distance a very picturesque appearance, not unlike the graceful bornouse of the Arabs.

Equally useful and expensive is the hammock, one of the few articles of native manufacture produced in Venezuela, and one which has thus far baffled the ingenuity of foreign weavers to imitate. It is woven by hand on looms of rude construction in very tasteful designs, and trimmed with fringings of the most complicated pattern. A fine hammock costs from fifty to sixty dollars.

It may truly be said that with hammock, poncho, and the saddle with its array of pockets, &c., the roving dwellers of the pampas are at home wherever they may be. They are, in fact, the tent, bed, and valise best adapted to the country, affording them all the comfort that a princely rajah could experience under his gorgeous panoply of oriental magnificence,

and possessing, moreover, the advantage of being easily conveyed from place to place, in a small compass, by the riders. The hammock and the poncho usually form a bundle behind the saddle; with them the traveller makes himself a tent when camping out, by stretching out a rope from end to end of the hammock, over which the poncho is thrown at oblique angles, and then tied securely to the rope. Under it the traveller may now defy the storm, and even Old Boreas himself, as the stronger the tent is impelled to and fro, the more lulling to the sleeper will be the motion imparted to it from the outside.

It is surprising to see a horse of so small stature as those from the Llanos generally are, carry on his back both the weight of the rider and his ponderous equipment for such considerable distances; but the fact is, that the loads are so well distributed and counterbalanced, that the animals feel no material inconvenience therefrom.

CHAPTER II.

THE MORROS.

Early the next morning we were aroused by the trampling of horses and tinkling of stirrups close to our resting places, apprising us that the hour of departure was near at hand. To travel with comfort in those hot regions, it is necessary to make the most of the absence of the sun, before its rays descend to the earth in glowing streams, parching the body and spirits of the traveller. Our people, therefore, commenced to saddle and load as early as three o'clock A. M. The operation usually occupied considerable time, as each animal had to be hunted in the dark, as well as its accoutrements. The baggage mules, especially, required more than ordinary skill in replacing and adjusting the loads upon their backs by means of a hundred turns of the *lazos*, or raw-hide halters. And even after the greatest precautions, the vicious creatures endeavored to displace their loads by running against each other or rolling on the ground, to the inconceivable disgust of the drivers, who were often compelled to alight from their sumpters to put things to rights.

Our road lay this day across a wild and desolate valley, presenting the appearance of having once been

the scene of violent convulsions of nature, judging from the distorted masses of granite and gneiss piled along the route. The morning, though moonless, was bright with stars, which in those latitudes sparkle like diamonds in a setting of azure. The air was balmy; and the solitude of the spot, only broken by the occasional shriek of a night owl, or the refreshing murmur of a mountain stream, was truly sublime.

Slowly winding our course down the rugged sides of a deep ravine, we came suddenly in view of a most glorious spectacle. The delicate tints of dawn were already gilding the rugged crest of the distant mountains; above these rose in silent grandeur what appeared at first a heavy cloud of an intense blue, the irregular outlines of which set in bold relief against the transparent sky, forming the background to the picture. I eagerly spurred my mule forward to gain an eminence from whence I could contemplate more advantageously that magnificent spectacle, when, to my great astonishment, I discovered that, what I had supposed a cloud, was in fact the famous promontory known as the Morros de San Juan, the singular conformation of which has given rise to many speculations and legendary dissertations on the part of savants and others less versed in scientific researches. When the sun rose above the horizon, a more extraordinary scene was never unfolded to the eye of the spectator. The huge and rugged mountain, some thousand feet high, stood in the midst of a desolate gulf, apparently of volcanic origin; while the vegetation, stunted and scrubby for want of adequate nourishment, contrasted singularly with the granite

masses scattered all over the valley. The meandering rivulet of La Puerta, twice the scene of sanguinary conflicts between patriots and Spaniards, threaded its sparkling way through that Valley of Death, to mix its waters with those of the beautiful Guárico in the distance. In both of those engagements the arms of Spain were victorious; but, as often happened in those days of *guerra á muerte*, the victors steeped their laurels in the blood of the vanquished with unsparing hand. These triumphs were shared alternately by the monster Boves and the sanguinary Morillo. It would be difficult to find two more bloody wretches than these myrmidons of despotism, whose very names are to this day the avenging cry against the race from which they both sprang. The forces opposed to them in these engagements hardly amounted to one-half their own numbers; but the patriots under Bolivar accepted the battle with the despair of men who have no alternative between death and an ignominious yoke. It is asserted that the rivulet became, on both occasions, completely glutted with the gore and dead bodies of the vanquished. Morillo had a very narrow escape from the lance of the famous Juan Pablo Farfan, who deliberately attacked the Spanish chieftain in the midst of his staff. Although the bold Llanero succeeded in piercing the groin of the Spaniard with his lance, the wound was not sufficiently deep to cause his death.

The rugged crest of the mountain surrounded by an atmosphere resplendently clear, the wild and

shattered rocks, piled like the giant skeletons of an extinct race, together with the painful associations connected with the spot, made an impression upon my mind not easily forgotten.

Although I had often experienced a keen desire to see this natural wonder of my country, I could not repress a feeling of regret at the recollection of the sanguinary scenes enacted on this spot, and that my first impressions of astonishment should be replaced by others of a less pleasing character.

On awakening from the reverie into which the scene had plunged me, I perceived for the first time that I was alone, my less contemplative companions having proceeded on their journey while I was absorbed in wonder. I felt glad of my solitude, for the very silence seemed to breathe a prayer to the Almighty for the martyred children of Liberty before one of his most glorious temples.

We reached the village of San Juan in time to breakfast at the house of our excellent friend Don José Pulido, a gentleman of most amiable and hospitable disposition. While they prepared our morning meal, I repaired to the outskirts of the village to sketch the Morros, which from the distance appeared two huge castles in ruins. The continued action of the waters has furrowed the sides of the mountain—composed principally of a peculiar limestone—into many fantastic forms. The same wearing action has in like manner perforated the calcareous rock into a thousand subterranean passages or chasms of fathomless depth, it being asserted by persons who have approached sufficiently near the entrance of these caves, that a bowlder rolled down the abyss, is never heard to strike the bottom. I regretted exceedingly that our short stay at this place would not permit me to visit the interior of the main entrance to these subterranean passages, no person ever having ventured within the dark abode—as it is currently believed—of demons and the like. As a proof of this assertion, the villagers point out to the inquisitive traveller a spring issuing from that Tartarus highly charged with sulphurated hydrogen gas, the fumes of which are in themselves sufficiently powerful to convey the idea that something diabolical must be brewing in the bowels of the stupendous mountain. The spring, however, possesses highly medicinal virtues; on this account it is often visited by invalids from various parts of the country, especially those affected with rheumatic or scrofulous complaints.

During a heavy freshet, the bones of an antedi-

luvian animal, supposed to be those of a mastodon, were disinterred by the torrent in the bed of a ravine. A portion of these bones were sent to us by our zealous friend Don José, as a great curiosity; as such they were transferred to the British Minister at Caracas, and finally consigned by him to the great Museum in London.

The village of San Juan is likewise noted for its fine climate and the total absence of epidemics. Invalids affected with pulmonary complaints find there also an air and temperature most congenial. Beyond these advantages, San Juan offers no other attractions to the stranger capable of inducing a longer sojourn than is absolutely necessary, as not even a ranch has been raised there for the convenience of those seeking its beneficent waters.

After partaking of a substantial breakfast, composed of the most popular dishes of the country, such as *carne frita*, *sancocho*, and some delicious fish from the river Guárico, we bade adieu to our estimable host, Don José, and continued our journey down the stony bottom of a narrow *quebrada* or ravine, noted for its many windings, and the quantities of sharp stones that pave the way; these are evidently the detached fragments of the basaltic formation constituting the base of the Morros. At Flores, a miserable country inn like all the rest along this route, we stopped a few moments to refresh ourselves with *guarapo*, a kind of cider made from the juice of sugar cane, or by dissolving *papelon* in water and allowing it to ferment for a few days. The guarapo of Flores is celebrated throughout the country, and no person

passing through this place ever omits to call for it. When mixed with aguardiente, it forms what is termed *carabina*, (carbine;) the effects rarely fail to knock down those who rashly brave its fire.

Our next stopping place was the village of Ortiz, a little beyond that of Parapara. Taken together, they might be considered as the Pillars of Hercules to the grassy Mediterranean of the Llanos, and the terminus of civilized pursuits in that quarter, as there you find the last vestiges of agriculture and the useful arts. In addition to small patches of sugar cane and Indian corn raised by the inhabitants for their own consumption, they excel in the manufacture of leather, saddles, and their appurtenances, which they sell to all parts of the country. Beyond this, nothing is to be met with but wild herds of cattle grazing on prairies or steppes of vast extent, with the exception of the narrow belt of park-like scenery intervening between these and a ridge of low, rocky hills—*galeras*—which skirts the ancient shore of the great basin of those pampas. The *galeras* were doubtless the natural rampart of that extraordinary body of waters which, at some remote epoch, must have filled the space now forming the grazing grounds of Venezuela, as attested by the nature of the soil and the organic remains found imbedded in the clay.

I noticed at Ortiz the same trap formation of the Morros, with extensive beds of basaltic slate protruding through the sides of the hills. Entire columns of this slate, varying from four to five feet in length by six inches diameter, are used in the village for

paving the thresholds of houses, their quadrangular form adapting them perfectly for this purpose without any additional labor after being detached from the rock. The action of the waters during the untold lapse of ages, or perhaps the irruptions of the sea itself when it beat against the sides of the hills, has caused the partial disintegration of the rock in many places, and scattered the debris far and wide over the surrounding country. Nevertheless, vegetation seemed nowhere affected in the least by this vast accumulation of loose stones; on the contrary, wherever it was favored by the depressions of the ground, trees of large dimensions, noted for hardness and durability, sprang up, forming dense forests on either side of the road. Foremost in the long catalogue of splendid timber trees of Venezuela, we found there growing in great perfection the *Vera*, or Lignum Vitæ—Zigophylum arboreum—the wood of which is so hard that it turns the edge of the best-tempered tools; breaking or splitting it seems equally impossible, on account of the interweaving of its fibres, which cross each other in diagonal layers. This tree has a wide range over the country, especially near the sea-coast, which circumstance renders it extremely useful in the construction of wharves, as well as for the keels of ships; the attacks of the teredo or sea-worm are futile upon the iron network of its fibres, on which account it can remain under water for an indefinite period and eventually become petrified. The useful *Guayacan* or guaiacum of the arts, a nearly allied species of this tree, is also found here in the greatest abundance; unfortunately it is too short to be

employed for the same purposes as the former; it finds, however, numerous applications in naval construction, especially for blocks and pulleys for the rigging of vessels. Turners employ it likewise for various articles requiring extreme hardness and a close grain.

The *Alcornoque*, a most beautiful tree, somewhat resembling the American elm, and scarcely inferior to the foregoing, raises here its graceful head above the rest, affording the cattle a permanent shade even during the driest seasons. It must not be confounded, however, with the well-known Spanish oak—Quercus suber—which yields the cork of commerce. It is largely employed in the Llanos in the construction of houses and fences. Braziletto wood—Cesalpinia braziletto—so celebrated for its beautiful dye, is so abundant here also, that all the fences at Ortiz and Parapara are made of this valuable dyewood.

The list of useful trees peculiar to this region could be extended beyond the limits of this chapter, were it not for the fear of taxing the patience of my reader with an abstract nomenclature. I cannot pass unnoticed, however, two other trees of no less importance to the natives, on account of their timber and medicinal properties; these are the *Tacamahaca*—Elaphrium tomentosum—and the tree that yields the precious balsam of copaiva—Copaifera officinalis. By making incisions in the trunk and branches of both these trees, a resinous fluid, possessing great healing powers when applied to wounds and other ailments of the flesh, is obtained in great abundance and collected in tin cans placed under the incisions. The

former is particularly abundant in the province of Guayana, where it attains to great dimensions. Its resin, an opaque, lemon-colored substance resembling wax, is very fragrant, and when mixed with that of *Caraña* or *Algarroba*, forms excellent torches which burn with great brilliancy, and emit a delicious odor. The bark is also remarkable as affording a material similar to that employed by the North American Indians in the construction of their canoes, and used similarly by their brethren of the Orinoco for their light pirogues. With this object the Indian separates the bark without breaking, and cutting it of the required dimensions, proceeds to join the extremities by means of *bejucos* or slender vines, filling the interstices with a little moist clay to throw off the water; the whole is then well bound with stronger vines, and a couple or more sticks are affixed between the borders of the pirogue to prevent its collapsing when launched into the broad stream.

CHAPTER III.

THE LLANOS.

We left Ortiz as usual, very early the next morning, stumbling here and there amidst the mass of loose stones which paved the way all along the winding bed of the *quebrada*. In proportion as we advanced on our route, the hills decreased in size, while the loose stones seemed to increase in quantity. The splendid groves of hardy and balsamiferous trees, which near Ortiz formed an almost impenetrable forest, gradually became less imposing in appearance, until they were replaced by thickets of thorny bushes, chiefly composed of several species of mimosas, with a delicate and feathery foliage. The traveller accustomed to the shade of a luxuriant vegetation, and to the sight of cultivated valleys, is struck by the rapid diminution of the former, and the total disappearance of the latter, as he emerges from the Galeras of Ortiz: yet he is somewhat compensated by the almost overpowering *perfume* shed by masses of the canary-colored blossoms with which these shrubs are loaded, from the

THE LLANOS.

summits down to the bending branches that trail the ground at every passing breeze.

Suddenly we entered a widely-extended tract of level land almost destitute of vegetation. With the exception of a few clumps of palm-trees with fan-like leaves, nothing but short grass covered its entire surface, almost realizing the idea of "an ocean covered with sea-weed." A dense mass of vapor pervading the atmosphere obscured the horizon, while the fan-palms, seen from afar, appeared like ships enveloped in a fog. Gradually the circle of the heavens seemed to close around us, until we became, as it were, encompassed by the sky. We were, in fact, treading the shores of the great basin of the Llanos, over one of the ancient shoals or *Mesas*, which, like successive terraces, now form the borders of those grassy oceans known as the Pampas. This was the Mesa de Paya, the seat of one of the cattle-farms to which we were bound.

After wandering for nearly three hours over this monotonous landscape without compass, and guided only by certain landmarks known to the *vaqueanos*, we came unexpectedly upon the borders of the Mesa, which commands an extensive view of the lower savannas. As if by magic the dreary scene changed to one of the most glorious panoramas in existence. At our feet lay a beautiful expanse of meadow, fresh and smooth as the best cultivated lawn, with troops of horses and countless herds of cattle dispersed all over the plain. Several glittering ponds, alive with all varieties of aquatic birds, reflected upon their limpid surface the broad-leaved

crowns of the fan-palms, towering above verdant groves of laurel, amyris, and elm-like *robles*. Further beyond, and as far as the eye could reach, the undulating plain appeared like a petrified ocean, after the sweeping tempest.

But I feel that my descriptions fall short of the reality, and that I am unable to depict the harmonious effects of light and shade, and the blending of the various tints of green, blue and purple, dispersed over this extensive panorama; the gentle undulations of the plain; the towering palms gracefully fanning the glowing atmosphere with their majestic crowns of broad and shining leaves; and myriad other beauties difficult to enumerate.

I could scarcely tear myself away from the spot, so fascinated was I with the novelty of the scene. My companions, more concerned for the speedy termination of the journey than the beautiful in nature, set off at a brisk trot towards the house, which was at no great distance. Fearing to lose my way among the intricate paths leading to it, I was compelled to follow in their wake, stopping occasionally to gaze once more upon those enchanting groves, which seemed to return me to the highly cultivated fields and green meadows of glorious "Old England," whence I had just returned.

On descending to the plain below, my attention was attracted to an unsightly group of palm-thatched huts, looking more like huge bee-hives than the abode of human beings. A formidable fence of palm trunks surrounded the premises, and several acres of ground beyond. These were the *corrals*, or enclosures

where the training of the fierce herds was practised by the hardy dwellers of the Llanos; but no signs of cultivation, or aught else connected with the rural occupations of the farmer, were visible in the neighborhood. Presently the cavalcade stopped before the gate, and all the individuals composing it dismounted and began to unsaddle their horses amidst the barking of a legion of dogs, and the braying of all the donkeys in the vicinity.

This was the *hato* or cattle-farm of San Pablo we were in quest of, famous in the annals of the civil wars in Venezuela, as the occasional head-quarters of the constitutional armies, commanded by the owner of this farm. Our leader was received at the entrance of his estate, by a grave and elderly negro slave, who acted as overseer, and had under his control all the men and property attached to it. Kneeling upon the stony court-yard, he kissed the hand extended to him in friendly greeting, after which he proceeded to unsaddle his master's horse, which he led to a pond within the enclosure, where the horses were watered.

We purposed remaining a few days at San Pablo, with the object of incorporating some fresh relays of mules and horses from the abundant stock of this estate: so we of the staff installed ourselves under the palm-roof of our rustic mansion, while the rank and file of the expedition found accommodation in the open barracoons adjoining it; although none of the party had reason to boast of being better off than their neighbor.

"It is sad when pleasing first impressions are obliterated," remarks a sentimental writer; "always

painful to become *desenchanté* on a more intimate acquaintance with either people or places." I soon found that I was not in the fairy land I had imagined, abounding in grottos and refreshed by sparkling fountains, but in the region of the Llanos where the French adage, *chacun pour soi et Dieu pour tous*, is verified to its fullest extent. San Pablo, with its vaunted prestige, and in spite of its proximity to several important marts, was no better provided with accommodations than the untidy douar of the wandering Arab of the Desert. A rickety table standing against the wall for fear of tumbling down, two or three clumsy cedar chairs covered with raw-hide, and a couple of grass hammocks, serving the double purpose of beds and lounges, constituted all the furniture of the great farm. As a substitute for wardrobes and hat-stands, we were shown a number of deer-antlers and bull-horns imbedded in the walls of reeds and mud, on which to hang our pouches, bridles, &c. I searched in vain, on our arrival, for something like a bowl in which to lave my hands and face, covered with dust and parched by the broiling sun of the savannas. Even water was so scarce that it was served to us sparingly from a large calabash gourd used in bringing it from the river, nearly a mile distant. It is true there was, within the enclosure of the houses, a pond or excavation, made while searching for the remains of a brave officer who fell fighting for his country's freedom. Sufficient water had accumulated there during the rainy season to entitle it to the name of *Laguna*, or Lake of Genaro Vazquez, the name of the afore-mentioned hero; but it was so filled with

Bavas—a small species of alligator,—terrapins, and toads, as to render the water undrinkable.

But to return to our head-quarters, the structure of which struck me so forcibly at first as a bee-hive of vast proportions, naturally suggesting the idea of a "land of milk and honey." Unfortunately neither of these could be obtained either for love or money, although the woods and pastures of the estate abounded in both the creatures that produced them. So we were compelled to resort to our reserved stock of *papelon* to sweeten our coffee, and to its own delicious natural aroma in the place of milk. As to the house itself, it only differed from the rest in that region in being larger, and perhaps in better order than are the generality. Imagine a pyramidal structure, thatched with palm leaves, the roof slanting to within a few feet of the ground, and supported on stout posts of live timber, which served also as framework for the walls, and you will have some idea of the style of architecture peculiar to the country. Doors and windows are of no account in a country uniformly warm throughout the year, and where the inhabitants possess few articles capable of tempting the cupidity of light-fingered gentry. Therefore, an ox-hide stretched across the openings left in the walls to admit light and the inmates, is all that is required to keep off uninvited guests. As an exception to this rule, our mansion of San Pablo had one or two rooms set apart for invalids, provided with doors and windows of solid planks of timber in the rough; the other apartments had the upper half of the walls purposely left open, to admit full and free entrance of light and air. A

narrow piazza or corridor, formed by the slanting of the roof to within five feet of the ground, ran along the entire length of the main building, and was intended more as a protection to the rooms against the sun and rains, than as a resort for the inmates.

The first step, on arriving, was to secure a place in the open reception room, for my own chattels and hammock, before all the spare posts and hooks had been appropriated by my companions. This accomplished, I proceeded to a thorough examination of my saddle and its accoutrements, so as to have them adapted to the peculiar mode of travelling in the Llanos. This care I left to the good judgment of our attendants, not being myself sufficiently skilled in the art of mending, greasing, and putting in order the complicated gear of our riding equipment. In the same predicament were also my two English companions, and our worthy doctor; a kind word, however, addressed to the good-natured Llaneros—especially if accompanied with a drop of aguardiente—never failed of enlisting their services in our favor.

Habit, as well as necessity, is sometimes the mother of invention, as my experience soon taught me that, to get along in my new quarters, it would be requisite to set aside the airs and insignia of civilization. Divesting myself, therefore, of all such superfluities as coat, cravat, pants, and shoes, I adopted the less cumbrous attire of the Llaneros, consisting mainly of breeches tightly buttoned at the knee, and a loose shirt, usually of a bright checkered pattern. Shoes are altogether dispensed with in a country like the Llanos, subject to drenching rains, and covered with

mud during a great portion of the year, besides the inconvenience they offer to the rider in holding the stirrup securely when in chase of wild animals. The leg, however, is well protected from the thorns and cutting grass of the savannas by a neat legging or *botin*, made of buffskin, tightly buttoned down the calf by knobs or studs of highly polished silver. Another characteristic article of dress, and one in which the wearers take great pride, is the linen checkered handkerchief, loosely worn around the head. Its object is ostensibly to protect it from the intensity of the sun's rays; but the constant habit of wearing it has rendered the handkerchief as indispensable a headdress to the Llaneros as is the cravat to the neck of the city gentleman.

One angle of the building was devoted to the kitchen, and rooms for the overseer and his family; the other was set apart for a store-room, suggesting hidden treasures of good things for the comfort of the inner man. Being naturally inquisitive, I lost no time in investigating the contents of the *bodega;* but instead of sweetmeats, fresh cheese, or even bread and butter,—articles of easy manufacture in the Llanos, on which I had feasted my imagination,—I found the place filled with roaches, pack-saddles, old bridles, lazos, and *tasajo* or jerked beef. This last is prepared by cutting fresh beef into long strips, and exposing them to dry in the sun, first rubbing them thoroughly with salt. Animal substances spoil so readily in tropical climates, that unless this precaution is taken immediately after a bullock is slaughtered, the meat becomes tainted in a short time. Two

or three days' exposure to the hot sun of the Llanos, is *sufficient* to render the beef as dry and tough as leather; in this state, it may be stored away for six months without spoiling. The older the better; age imparting to it that peculiar rank flavor which makes *tasajo* so highly prized by people of all ranks in Cuba and other West India Islands. Large shipments of this beef have been made from Venezuela to those places; but the competition of Buenos Ayres has reduced of late the profits arising from this branch of our exports. The manner of killing and quartering an animal in the Llanos deserves particular mention. The cattle being usually some distance from the house, two horsemen are despatched after the victim; one of them gallops close to the animal's rear, and throwing his unerring lazo at its head, drags it along, while his companion urges it on by means of his *garrocha* or goad, until they reach the sacrificial post: one or two turns of the lazo around this, bring the animal close to the *botalon;* the matador then plunges the point of his dagger into the vertebræ back of the head, and the struggling beast drops as if struck by an electric spark; a second thrust of the bloody dagger into his throat severs the artery, and the blood gushes in torrents through the wound from every part of his body. The prostrate victim is now turned upon its back, and a long incision made lengthwise of the belly, preparatory to flaying and cutting up the carcass. When the animal is not intended to be immediately slaughtered, he is tied to the post by a succession of coils from the lazo around his horns, and left there until the fatal moment comes to despatch him.

One night I was awakened by a terrific bellowing proceeding from the *botalon;* but, as I knew there was no bullock there for slaughter at the moment, I was at a loss how to account for this uproarious serenade. Curiosity led me to inquire into the cause, and directing my steps towards the spot, I beheld a group of about a dozen bulls, smelling at the blood of their former companions, and ploughing up the gore with their hoofs, evidently in great distress. This continued for some time, until, finding their bewailing by moonlight rather too touching even for artists' ears, we ordered them to be driven away, in spite of the sublimity of the scene. I had other opportunities of witnessing similar testimonials of respect, whenever a herd of cattle approached the place of execution, which never failed to impress me deeply with a feeling of compassion for their sorrows.

Every morning an animal was slaughtered for us. Our meals consisted of roast beef, without either vegetables or wheaten bread. Indian corn we had in abundance, both in the grain and in the husk; but before it could be converted into *arepas*—the favorite bread of the country—it required to be passed through a variety of operations each day, which made the process rather tedious, as the grain must first be hulled by pounding it in large wooden mortars, adding a handful of sand and a little water: next the grain must be separated from the chaff, thoroughly washed, and then boiled over a slow fire. In doing this, care must be used, for if too soft it will not answer the purpose. Finally it is ground to a paste between two stones, formed into flat cakes, and baked in shallow pans of

earthenware. The result of all this labor is bread exceedingly white and nourishing; but it has the disadvantage of becoming tough and unpalatable when cold. Under the popular name of *tortillas*, this bread is also extensively used in Mexico and Central America, although inferior to our own.

Even this was considered a great luxury at San Pablo, few other cattle-farms being provided with the necessary utensils for its manufacture, and still fewer the number of those that will grow sufficient corn for the consumption of their inmates. The Llaneros are essentially a pastoral people, and trouble themselves but little with the cultivation of the land, considering it rather derogatory to bend their heads, even to mother Earth. Hence their homes are usually in a state of utter wretchedness, being unprovided even

with the commonest necessaries. Although the land is extremely fertile, and would well repay the labor with abundant crops of every kind of grain, they do not consider bread an essential, using instead a piece of boiled liver, which in their estimation answers just as well. Therefore the divine command, which enjoins us to earn our daily bread by the sweat of the brow, is not much regarded by them. In the midst of countless herds, and surrounded with the most munificent gifts of a bountiful Providence, they are often even without fresh meat; not because they are sparing of their cattle, which in that country bears a nominal value, but because they are naturally abstemious; and as for milk and butter, they despise both as food only fit for children. Cheese, however, is a favorite article of food with them, and in its preparation, they display considerable ability, especially the delicious kind termed *queso de manos*, a species of boiled cheese. As some of my readers may wish to experiment in making it, I will give them the recipe. Curd the milk in the usual way, and boil the curd in its own whey. When about the consistency of molasses candy, stretch it out repeatedly with the hands until cold. Add a little salt to the mass; roll it into flat cakes, and hang the cheese to drain in nets suspended from the ceiling. When pulled, it will separate in layers which look like parchment, retaining all the flavor of the milk.

The cows, being half wild in most cases, require to be milked by main force. To accomplish this, one of the dairymen throws a noose around the horns of the animal, and holds it secure by means of a long

pole attached to the thong, while another proceeds to milk it in the usual way; but none will yield a drop, unless the calf is first allowed to suck a little, and then tied to the mother's knee.

Every cow is distinguished by a fancy name, such as Clavellina, Flor del Campo, Marabilla, and others equally euphonious and poetical. When called to be milked, the tame ones immediately answer in suppressed bellowings, and come forward of their own accord, while the calves confined in the pen, on hearing their mothers' names, run along the fence in search of the gate; a boy, stationed there for the purpose, lets fall one of the bars, and off they bound after the mothers.

The men perform there altogether the occupations allotted to women in other countries, such as milking the cows, curding the milk, and turning out the cheese when ready. They do not even disdain cooking their own food, and washing their own garments, when occasion requires. Of the women, I may be permitted to quote here what Sir Francis Head, in his quaint style, says with reference to those in the Pampas of Buenos Ayres, as being equally applicable to their sisters of the Llanos: "The habits of the women are very curious: they have literally nothing to do, the great plains which surround them offer no motive to work, they seldom ride, and *their* lives certainly are very indolent and inactive. They all have families, however, whether married or not; and once when I inquired of a young woman employed in nursing a very pretty child, who was the father of the 'criatura,' she replied 'Quien sabe?'" *

* Journeys across the Pampas.

But it is time to introduce my reader to a more intimate acquaintance with this singular race of people, whose manliness, bravery, and skill in waging a constant war, not only with the wild animals of the field, but against the proud legions of Iberia, entitle them to a place among the heroes of the earth.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LLANEROS.

"Dichoso aquel que alcanza
Como rico don del Cielo,
Para defender su suelo
Buen caballo y buena lanza."

—AROLAS.

THE people inhabiting the vast region of the Llanos, although claiming descent from the old Castilian race, once the rulers of the land, are, in fact, an amalgamation of the various castes composing the present population of the Republic. These are, the whites, or the descendants of the European settlers of the country; the aboriginals or Indians, and a great proportion of blacks. In most of the towns the native whites preponderate over all others, and represent the wealth, as well as the most respectable portion of the community; in the villages and thinly populated districts of the plains, a mongrel breed resulting from the admixture of these three, constitute the majority of the inhabitants. These are dispersed over an area of 27,000 square miles, making a proportion

of only fourteen individuals, out of a population of 390,000, to every square mile.

This race, although vastly inferior to the first in mental capacity and moral worth, is endowed with a physique admirably adapted to endure the fatigues of a life beset with dangers and hardships.* Cast upon a wild and apparently interminable plain, the domain of savage beasts and poisonous reptiles, their lot has been to pass all their life in a perpetual struggle, not only with the primitive possessors of the land, but with the elements themselves, often as fierce as they are grand. When it is not the alarm of the dreaded viper or the spotted jaguar, it is the sudden inroad of vast inundations, which, spreading with fearful rapidity over the land, sweep off in one moment their frail habitations and their herds. Nevertheless, this insecure existence, this continual

* Mons. de Lavayesse, in his interesting work on Venezuela, makes some pertinent remarks on this subject worthy of the consideration and study of learned physiologists. "Why is it," he says, "that individuals proceeding from a mixture of African and indigenous American blood, have greater strength, finer forms, more intellectual faculties and moral energy, than the Negro or Indian? Why, although the white be, in general, superior in strength of body, mental powers, and in moral force, to the aboriginal American and to the negro—why, I ask, are the individuals born of the union of a white with an Indian woman, (the Mestizos, for instance,) inferior in mental and corporeal qualities to the Zambos? Why are the Mestizos generally distinguished by finer figures, agreeable countenances, and in mildness and docility of their dispositions? Why is the mulatto, son of a white and a negress, superior to the Zambo in intellectual faculties, but his inferior in physical? Why is it, that when those races are mixed, their progeny is remarkable for a more healthy and vigorous constitution, and for more vital energy, than the individuals born in the same climate of indigenous European or African blood, without mixture?"

struggle between life and death, between rude intellect and matter, has for the Llanero a sort of fascination, perhaps not so well understood by people possessing the blessings and ideas of civilization, but without which he could not exist, especially if deprived of his horse and cast among the mountain region north of his cherished plains. The Modern Centaur of the desolate regions of the New World, the Llanero spends his life on horseback; all his actions and exertions must be assisted by his horse; for him the noblest effort of man is, when gliding swiftly over the boundless plain and bending over his spirited charger, he overturns an enemy or masters a wild bull. The following lines of Victor Hugo seem as though copied from this model: "He would not fight but on horseback; he forms but one person with his horse; he lives on horseback; trades, buys, and sells on horseback; eats, drinks, sleeps, and dreams on horseback." Like the Arab, he considers his horse his best and most reliable friend on earth, often depriving himself of rest and comfort after a hard day's journey to afford his faithful companion abundance of food and water. It is not at all surprising, therefore, to hear the bard—all Llaneros are poets more or less—exclaim, after the loss of both his wife and valued horse:

Mi muger y mi caballo
Se me murieron á un tiempo;
Que muger, ni que demonio,
Mi caballo es lo que siento.

My wife and my valued horse
Died both at the same time;
To the devil with my wife,
For my horse do I repine.

Few people in the world are better riders than the Llaneros of Venezuela, if we except perhaps the Gauchos of Buenos Ayres, or equal to either in the dexterity they display in the wonderful feats of horsemanship to which their occupations in the field inure them from childhood. Their horses, moreover, are so well trained to the various evolutions of their profession, that animal and rider seem to possess but one existence.

The life of the Llanero, like that of the Gaucho his prototype, is singularly interesting, and resembles in many respects that of others who, like them, have their abode in the midst of extensive plains. Thus they have been aptly styled the Cossacks and the Arabs of the New World, with both of whom they have many points in common, but more especially do they resemble the last named. When visiting the famous Constantine Gallery of paintings at Versailles, I was struck with the resemblance of the Algerine heroes of Horace Vernet with our own, revealing at once the Moorish descent of the latter, independently of other characteristic peculiarities.

The inimitable author of "Journeys Across The Pampas," already quoted, alluding to the life of these wild shepherds of the plains, compares it very appropriately to the rise and progress of a young eagle, so beautifully described by Horace in the following verses:

Olim juventas et patrius vigor
Nidum laborum propulit inscium;
Vernique, jam nimbis remotis,
Insolitos docuere nisus

Venti paventem; mox in ovilia
Demisit hostem vividus impetus;
Nunc in reluctantes dracones
Egit amor dapis atque pugnæ.

—Horace, Book iv., Ode iv.

"Whom native vigor, and the rush
Of youth have spurr'd to quit the nest,
And skies of blue, in springtide's flush,
Entice aloft to breast
The gales he fear'd before his lordly plumes were drest.

"Now swooping, eager for his prey,
Spreads havoc through the flutter'd fold;
Straight, fired by love of food and fray,
In grapple fierce and bold,
The struggling dragons rends, e'en in their rocky hold."

—Translation by Martin.

"Born in the rude hut, the infant Gaucho receives little attention, but is left to swing from the roof in a bullock's hide, the corners of which are drawn towards each other by four strips of hide. In the first year of his life he crawls about without clothes, and I have more than once seen a mother give a child of this age a sharp knife, a foot long, to play with. As soon as he walks, his infantine amusements are those which prepare him for the occupations of his future life; with a lazo made of twine he tries to catch little birds, or the dogs, as they walk in and out of the hut. By the time he is four years old he is on horseback, and immediately becomes useful by assisting to drive the cattle into the corral."

When sufficiently strong to cope with a wild ani-

mal, the young Llanero is taken to the *majada* or great cattle-pen, and there hoisted upon the bare back of a fierce young bull. With his face turned towards the animal's tail, which he holds in lieu of bridle, and his little legs twisted around the neck of his antagonist, he is whirled round and round at a furious rate. His position, as may be imagined, is any thing but equestrian; yet, the fear of coming in contact with the bull's horns compels the rider to hold on until, by a dexterous twist of the animal's tail while he jumps off its back, he succeeds in overturning his antagonist.

In proportion as he grows older and stronger, a more manly amusement is afforded him with the breaking in of a wild colt. This being, however, a more dangerous experiment, in which many a "young eagle" is rendered a "lame duck," he is provided with the necessary accoutrements to withstand the terrible struggle with the animal. Firmly seated upon his back and brandishing overhead a tough *chaparro* vine for a whip, the apprentice is thus installed in his new office, from which he must not descend until the brute is perfectly subdued; the coil of lazo in the hands of his merciless instructor would be the least evil awaiting him should he otherwise escape safe and sound from the desperate kicks and plunges of the horse.

Here commences what we may term, the public life of the Llanero; his education is now considered complete. From this moment all his endeavors and ambition will be to rival his companions in the display of physical force, which he shows to an admi-

rable degree when, armed with his tough lazo, he pursues the wild animals of his domain. If a powerful bull or wild horse tries to escape into the open plain, the cavalier unfurls the noose which is always ready by his side, and the fugitive is quickly brought back to the corral. Should the thong give way under the impetuous flight of the animal, the rider seizes him by the tail, and whirling round suddenly, pulls towards him with so much force as to cause his immediate overthrow.

In all these exercises the roving cavalier of the Llanos acquires that feeling of security and enduring disposition for which he is famous. Unfortunately, it is often turned to account in disturbing the balance of power among his more enlightened countrymen; for he is always ready to join the first revolutionary movement offering him the best chances for equipping himself with arms of all descriptions. Next to the horse, the Llanero esteems those weapons which give him a superiority over his fellow-creatures, viz., a lance, a blunderbuss, and a fine sword. If he is unprovided with either of these, he considers himself a miserable and degraded being, and all his efforts will tend to gratify this favorite vanity, even at the risk of his own life. Therefore he goes to war, because he is sure, if victorious, of finding the battle-field covered with these tempting trophies of his ambition. In this, unfortunately, he is too often encouraged by a host of unprincipled politicians who, not wishing to earn a livelihood by fair means, are eternally plotting against the powers that be.

The style of sword worn by the Llaneros differs

little from that used by Spaniards of the middle ages, the hilt being surmounted by a guard in the shape of a reversed cup, affording an excellent protection to the hand that wields it, while the blade is made with two edges, instead of one. Most of these swords are mounted in silver, the same as the accompanying dagger, another of their favorite weapons; and such is the passion among Llaneros for glittering swords and daggers, that they would sooner dispense with a house or a corral, than with either of these expensive commodities.

The lance comes next in importance, and in their hands is quite a formidable weapon, which they are enabled to handle with great dexterity, from their constant practice with the *garrocha* or goad with which they drive and turn the cattle. As an element of war, the lance has become celebrated in the country, having rendered the cause of Independence the most effectual service in repelling the attacks of the sanguinary hosts sent by Spain against the indomitable "Rebeldes" of Colombia.

The *trabuco* or blunderbuss, too, is held in great estimation as a weapon of defence, or rather of aggression, as they are at all times ready to test its powers on the slightest provocation; and nobody thinks of travelling in that desert country without one of these wide-mouthed spitfires by his side.

Being rather of a superstitious turn of mind, these people believe that by decorating their deadly weapons with some insignia of their religion, they are rendered more effectual; the cross surmounts their swords and daggers; while the rosary and *agnus Dei*

entwine the butt-end of their *trabucos*, when called into requisition. Thus they are emboldened to perform acts of desperate valor which, under any other circumstances, would be considered rash in the extreme.

Such is the religious faith of these benighted people; a religion of form and superstition rather than conviction. Christianity, like the Spanish language, exists among them, it is true; but corrupted and enveloped in dark superstition, almost bordering on idolatry. It cannot, however, be expected that a widely scattered population over so extensive an area of desert plains, should possess any means of enlightenment beyond what is conveyed to them through the few teachers distributed among the principal towns of the interior. Therefore it is not an unusual thing to meet with persons owning extensive cattle farms, and even holding important commissions in the army, who cannot read or write. During the good old times of the Capuchin Missions, the youth of the villages under their control received at their hands a scanty education, principally in the primary notions of the catechism; but with the destruction of those beneficent establishments, during the protracted struggle between natives and Spaniards, they were replunged into utter ignorance, and most of their places of worship have long since gone to decay. They have retained, nevertheless, enough of the extravagant notions of that school to establish a creed singularly at variance with the teachings of the Gospel, and founded principally on a belief in saints and amulets. The latter consist in little trinkets wrought

in gold or silver; or written orisons carefully preserved in leathern bags and worn suspended from their rosaries around their necks. Most of these orisons are the more extravagant from the fact they have no meaning whatever; yet this very obscurity seems to attach greater value to them, their principal charm consisting, as they say, in their mysterious import.

Great faith is also placed in certain prayers which are supposed to have the power of driving away the Devil, curing diseases and averting all kinds of evil.

As regards their Creator, they only have some vague ideas; they believe, for instance, in one God; *mais voila tout.* They seem to entertain greater fear of Beelzebub and Death personified, both of whom they imagine to possess undisputed sway over His creatures. The first they fancy to be fashioned with horns, hoofs, and claws like some of their wild beasts. Their ideas of death are no less extravagant. A respectable old gentleman of my acquaintance who once found himself very low with fever, thus related his experience respecting this fearful vision. "Why!" said he to a circle of friends who came to congratulate him on his recovery, "I had always supposed that Death was actually a horrid skeleton skulking about the world in search of victims, and carrying in his hand a fearful hook with which he angled for us as we do for fish. No such thing, my friends, I assure you; Death, after all, is nothing more than lack of breath;" accompanying the assertion with a gentle pressure of his nose with his fingers and a hearty laugh.

As a natural consequence, the Llaneros, in spite

of their bravery and *sang froid* in other respects, entertain great fear of *espantos* or ghosts and apparitions. One of the most popular hallucinations of this kind is *la bola de fuego*, or "light of Aguirre the Tyrant," as the natives usually style it—a sort of *ignis fatuus*, arising from the decomposition of organic substances at the bottom of certain marshes. Superstitious imaginations, unacquainted with this phenomenon, readily transform these gaseous exhalations into the soul of the famous Lope de Aguirre wandering about the savannas. This adventurous individual had the satisfaction, while he lived, of discovering the great river Amazon. Being of a restless and bloody disposition, like all the heroes of that epoch, he started in search of El Dorado with a powerful expedition from Peru, which resulted in the discovery of the Father of Waters. He stained his laurels, however, with the blood of his own daughter, as well as with that of his companions, for which unpardonable atrocities it is believed his accursed soul was left to wander over those countries which he sullied with his crimes.* Now it appears before the terrified traveller in the form of a blazing ball of fire; a minute after it will be seen one or two miles off. If sufficiently near, the spectator cannot fail to observe the entrails of the wicked wanderer enveloped in the flames of this extraordinary apparition. Such is the power of affrighted imaginations which have converted one of the commonest phenomena of chemical action into the wildest speculation of besotted fanaticism.

* See Humboldt, Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America.

With regard to miracles and the interposition of the saints, the names of some of which are constantly in their mouths, the Llaneros also have many curious notions. For every emergency of their lives there is a special patron saint; San Pablo, like good old St. Patrick, is supposed to have entire sway over snakes and other vermin; San Antonio, the power of restoring stolen goods to their rightful owners; while San somebody else that of befriending the highway robber and assassin from the punishment of justice and violent death. As an illustration of this fact, I will relate here an incident which I witnessed during one of those endemic revolutions so typical of the Spanish American republics, and which never fail to foster lawless bands of desperadoes who, under the cover of political reforms, commit all sorts of depredations upon the helpless inhabitants.

JOSE URBANO, THE GUERILLA-CHIEF.

A digression for the sake of variety.

Shortly after our return from the Apure, a revolution broke out among the colored population; a class which until then had been the most peaceful and submissive, but since perverted to such a degree as to require all the energies and resources of the white race to save itself from utter ruin and degradation.

An ambitious demagogue, editor of a newspaper in the capital, had been seized with the mania, so

prevalent in South America, of becoming President (*pro tem.*) of the Republic. To this end, he spared no means in recommending himself to the public, through the columns of his paper, heaping at the same time all kinds of slander and abuse upon those who stood in his way. Finding, however, little coöperation from the better class of the community, he experienced no scruple in courting the favor of the colored population, who, he readily persuaded, "had a perfect right to share in the gains and property of their aristocratic masters." The Government was powerless in arresting the spirit of revolt which was daily being infused among the masses, as the Constitution allowed perfect freedom of the press, and the good citizens did not care to take the matter into their own hands. The consequence was, a fearful outbreak among the lower classes, backed by all the *tramposos* or broken-down speculators of the country, proclaiming community of property, and the ci-devant editor (who, by the way, had not a *sous* to stake in it) candidate for the next Presidency of the Republic. The revolt soon spread to the Llaneros, by far the most to be feared in the matter of hard blows; and although it was quelled in time through the efforts of General Paez, it sowed the seeds of discontent which have since brought forth to the country an abundant crop of revenge, violence, and rapine. It was during that campaign the incident I am about to relate occurred in the savannas of San Pablo.

We had just encamped for the night on the beautiful plain of Morrocoyes, not far from our place, when a messenger arrived to apprise the General that

the famous José Urbano, leader of a band of robbers who had committed several wanton murders in that neighborhood, had crossed over to San Pablo under cover of night. The General immediately despatched a dozen of his men after the banditti, with positive orders to follow up the *rastro* or trail to the world's end if necessary, and not return to his presence without the body of the leader, *muerto ó vivo*, dead or alive. To any other set of men less accustomed to the wild pursuits of the Llanos, this would have appeared an impossibility in a country like San Pablo, traversed in all directions by numerous cross-ways made by the cattle; but the instinct of those men in tracking runaways as well as stray animals, is truly wonderful. Although the plain was covered with the footprints of twenty thousand animals roaming wild over the savannas, they followed close on the heels of the banditti, until they fell in, unfortunately, with another trail left by some *vaqueros*. The night was very dark, and they easily mistook this for that of the enemy. As a matter of course it led them to a ranch where the unlucky *vaqueros* were amusing themselves at the game of monte. Without stopping to ascertain who the gamblers were, the troop charged in the midst of them, killing two or three innocent fellows, and dispersing the rest like a herd of wild sheep. The aggressors did not discover their mistake until one of the fugitives, who happened to be acquainted with the party, recognized the voice of the commander, and shouted to him to stop the carnage.

After this unfortunate encounter, it may be easy to conceive that the troopers were not slow in retrac-

ing their steps in search of the cause of their mistake; this time, however, with more prudence, carefully examining every trail until they found the right one. It led them to another ranch where Urbano was spending the evening in the society of one of his numerous sweethearts. Here they all dismounted very quietly, and leaving the horses in charge of two companions, they rushed into the ranch with a wild shout and lance in hand. The attack was so sudden, that most of the banditti were either killed or dispersed before they had time to seize their arms. Only their gallant leader stood at bay against tremendous odds, defending himself bravely for a long time with the assistance of his equally courageous sweetheart, who kept all the while urging him on like a tigress.

Overpowered at last by a superior force, and faint with the loss of blood from numerous wounds, the bandit fell at the feet of his sable Amazon. When raised, an amulet was found between his teeth so firmly held, that it required the united efforts of two men to remove it. On being opened, it was found to contain a written orison, shrouded in such mysterious language as would have defied the skill of a magician to decipher. This, I was informed, was the famous *Oracion del Justo Juez*, a singular misnomer for a talisman intended to befriend these *gente non sancta* in their marauding expeditions.

It was a lucky thing for the assailants that Urbano received at the outset a severe cut on his right arm, causing an immediate flow of blood which filled the pan of his *trabuco*, otherwise the affair would have terminated very differently. The ignition of the pow-

der was thus prevented just as he was in the act of discharging the contents of that engine of destruction amidst the group.

The body of the culprit was now tied on the back of a horse and conveyed to the presence of the General, as an atonement for the unfortunate mistake which had deprived him of the services of two or three valuable hands.

The news of this adventure spread as if by magic over the surrounding country and brought together great numbers of *curiosos*, among them, no doubt, many of Urbano's adherents, who might have discredited the statement. The General improved the opportunity to address them an impressive homily, ordering at the same time the mutilated body of the renowned bandit to be exposed on the public road for twenty-four hours, as a warning to others with similar proclivities.

The death of this man, considered invulnerable by the superstitious children of the Llanos, produced a more powerful impression upon them than if a great battle had been fought and won. Next day, hundreds of *facciosos*, availing themselves of a general amnesty granted by the Commander-in-Chief to repentant revolutionists, began to arrive from various quarters and gave in their submission.

Thus ended for the time being one of the most dangerous outbreaks that had ever occurred in the country, from the nature of the principles involved. As to the originator, he was subsequently eclipsed by a bolder political aspirant, the ever-memorable José T. Monagas. This worthy, of whom more especial

mention will be made hereafter, and who, in an evil hour for his country, was called to fill the chair of State, profiting by the condition of anarchy in which the other had plunged the nation, afterwards shot down the Representatives of the people in Congress assembled, and proclaimed himself absolute ruler, thus leaving the other ambitious pretender to exclaim with the poet:

"Hos ego versiculos feci, tulit alter honores."

CHAPTER V.

SCENES AT THE FISHERY.

Four days we remained at San Pablo making arrangements for the contemplated expedition to the Apure; but the horses being quartered at considerable distance, we removed to La Yegüera, a small farm within the estate exclusively devoted to the breeding of those animals. Great numbers of mules were also raised there, which made the equine stock amount to nearly three thousand animals of all ages. There, untrammelled by barriers of any kind, they roamed at will over those beautiful meadows in a semi-wild state; their only keeper was a half-breed, who with his family occupied the Ranch, which on that occasion was to shelter us also. This Ranch being too small, however, for the accommodation of the whole party, most of them bivouacked in a grove of lofty Cesalpinias and Carob trees, from whose spreading branches they slung their hammocks, the dense foliage forming a sufficient shelter from the heavy dews of night and the heat of the sun by day.

Our Leader, the Doctor, and myself, were domi-

ciled at the Ranch. Having the full range of the neighboring groves during the day, we had then no occasion to use our single apartment, already partially occupied with the culinary utensils and other wares of the family. But on retiring to our hammocks at night, the scene presented was rather ludicrous. In the same room allotted to us slept the keeper, his wife, and their numerous progeny, with all the dogs and chickens of the household huddled together in the most familiar manner. Notwithstanding, I will confess that the arrangement was not altogether disagreeable to me, as in close propinquity slept two of the prettiest damsels I had yet encountered in that region, with eyes brilliant enough to render other light superfluous. The only important hindrance to my nightly repose was the occasional flapping of wings and the hourly crowing of our host's favorite gamecock, tied directly under my hammock, and who served for clock and night-watchman to the establishment.

Agapito, our host, had an easy time as overseer of this domain, his only occupation being from time to time to scour the savannas in search of young foals which might have been attacked by the *gusano*. This is the larvæ of a species of fly deposited in the umbilical cord of the new born, and which, if not promptly removed, will eat into the very vitals. It is fortunately not difficult to destroy them by the use of powdered *cebadilla*, the seed of a liliaceous plant (Veratrum cebadilla) abounding in veratrine. For this purpose, the keeper is always provided with a horn filled with the poisonous drug, and a wooden spatula.

With the latter he digs out the worms and fills the wound with the powder to prevent a renewal of their attacks.

Groves and meadows unequalled for their luxuriance and natural beauty surrounded us on all sides, while numerous springs and rivulets, issuing from the foot of the terrace-like *Mesas*, rushed down the declivity of the plain, increasing the volume of the beautiful Guárico on whose banks stood the primitive abode of our unsophisticated host. This river is justly celebrated for the abundance and superiority of its fish; so, without delay, providing myself with hook and line, I proceeded thither, being anxious to procure specimens for my sketch-book, and also a substitute for our daily fare of beef. But, strange to relate, each time I dropped hook in the water, it was carried away in some mysterious manner, without the least motion being imparted to the float. My tackle, which I had brought from England, although arranged for fly-fishing, was capable of bearing a fish of many pounds weight; but as I soon lost all my stock in hand in the vain endeavor to secure my specimens, I gave up in disgust and returned to the Ranch that the mystery might, if possible, be explained. On seeing my slender lines, mine host with a broad grin facetiously remarked that they were good to play at fishing with, the only drawback to the amusement being that the *caribe*, a fish not larger than a perch, would carry off all my playthings. Impossible, said I; the lines are strong enough to lift you out of the water if necessary; to this he quietly replied, directing my attention to a mutilated finger of his right

hand, "Do you see this? well, not long ago I was washing my hands in the river after slaughtering a calf, when a caribe darted at my finger and carried off a part before I was even aware of his approach." Here was a serious obstacle to my favorite sport, and to the pleasure that Mr. Thomas and I had anticipated in sketching the various kinds of fish peculiar to that region. Fortunately, a short distance down the river was a fishing encampment provided with all the necessary appliances for obtaining the fish in large quantities. Of these we resolved to avail ourselves; but as several others of our party were equally interested, our leader despatched a messenger to the fishermen, inviting them to come up the river with their nets, and fish in our presence. To this they readily acceded, and soon after made their appearance paddling themselves over the water in four large canoes laden, among other things, with their *chinchorros* or seines, which they at once proceeded to spread across the stream, covering a deep *charco* or pool known to contain abundance of fish. Although the river at this season was very low, owing to the usual summer drought, pools of considerable depth were left at intervals, and in these the fish sought refuge in vast numbers from the season's heat and from the eager pursuit of the fishermen, of which the latter sang, while spreading their seines, in the following lines:

Guavina le dijo á Bagre
Vámonos al caramero,
Porque ya viene el verano
Y nos coge el chinchorrero.

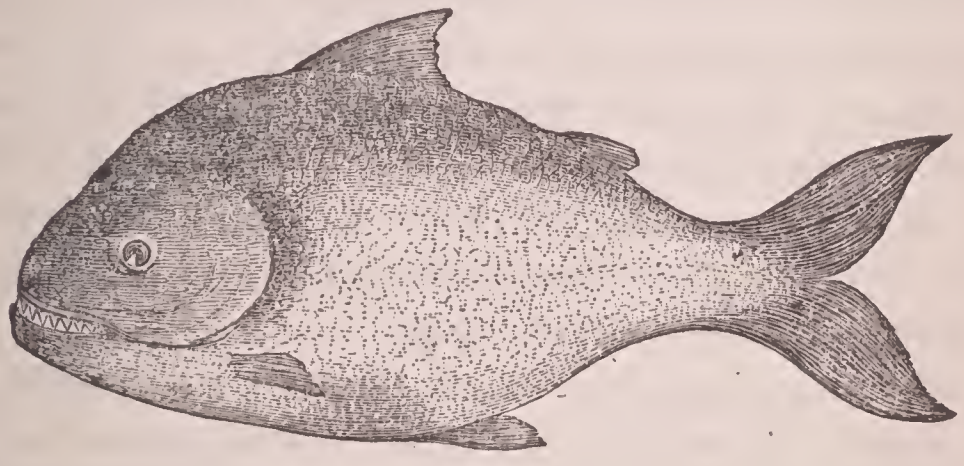
As the nets were dragged towards each other, the fish could be seen by thousands moving within the space embraced by the seines. Indeed, so numerous were they, that it soon became impossible to pull them in shore without previously relieving them of a portion of their contents. Accordingly, some of the men, armed with throw-nets, harpoons, and *bicheros* —these last large hooks affixed to wooden handles— plunged into the midst of the finny multitude, and commenced an onslaught on the largest among them. Presently one of the men came out with a monstrous fellow of the catfish tribe beautifully striped like a Bengal tiger, and like him having a thick snout furnished with long barbs. This species is called the

bagre rayado or striped catfish, and is much esteemed by people of all classes as a substitute for beef during Lent. Large quantities are salted and sent at that time to the capital and other cities, where, under the name of *pescado llanero*, it forms one of the delicacies of the season. Some of these fish attain an enormous size, measuring five, six, and even seven feet in length, and are so fat that a single one is a load for two men.

In diving with the *bichero*, much caution was necessary on the part of the men lest they should be

hooked by their hasty companions in lieu of the fish. A more important source of anxiety to the divers, was several dangerous fish among the multitude struggling in the water, such as the Ray-fish, whose tail is furnished with a sting three inches long, with which it inflicts a very painful wound; Electric eels, whose touch alone will paralyze in an instant the muscles of the strongest man; the Payara, shaped somewhat like a sabre, and equally dangerous. The lower jaw of this last is furnished with a formidable pair of fangs, not unlike those of the rattlesnake; with these it inflicts as smooth a gash as if cut with a razor; and finally, the *caribe*, whose ravenous and bloodthirsty propensities have caused it to be likened to the cannibal tribe of Indians, once the terror of those regions, but now scattered over the towns and villages along the course of the Orinoco. Each time the nets were hauled in shore, half a dozen or more of these little pests were to be seen jumping in the crowd, their jaws wide open tearing whatever came in their way, especially the meshes of the nets, which they soon rendered useless. Their sharp triangular teeth, arranged in the same manner as those of the shark, are so strong, that neither copper, steel, nor twine can withstand them. The sight of any red substance, blood especially, seems to rouse their sanguinary appetite; and as they usually go in swarms, it is extremely dangerous for man or beast to enter the water with even a scratch upon their bodies. Horses wounded with the spur are particularly exposed to their attacks, and so rapid is the work of destruction, that unless immediate assistance is rendered, the fish

soon penetrate the abdomen of the animal and speedily reduce it to a skeleton; hence, doubtless, their appellation of *mondonguero*—tripe-eater. There are other varieties of the *caribe* in the rivers of the Llanos, but none so bold and bloodthirsty as this glutton of the waters. So abundant is this species in some rivers of the Apure, that it is a common saying among Llaneros: "there is more *caribe* than water."



Every feature of this miniature cannibal denotes the ferocity and sanguinary nature of its tastes. The piercing eye, surrounded by a bloody-looking ring, is expressive of its cruel and bloodthirsty disposition. Its under jaw, lined with a thick cartilaginous membrane which adds greatly to its strength, protrudes considerably beyond the upper, giving, as this formation of jaw does to all animals possessing it, likewise an expression of ferocity. Large spots of a brilliant orange hue cover a great portion of its body, especially the belly, fins, and tail. Toward the back, it is of a bluish ash color, with a slight tint of olive green, the intermediate spaces being of a pearly white, while

the gill-covers are tinged with red. The inhabitants being often compelled to swim across streams infested with them, entertain more fear of these little creatures than of that world-renowned monster, the crocodile. This last, although a formidable antagonist in the water, can be easily avoided and even conquered in single combat by daring men, while the former, from their diminutive size and greater numbers, can do more mischief in a short time than a legion of crocodiles.

The other kinds of caribe, although larger in size, are less dangerous than the preceding, and some even perfectly harmless. Among these, the black caribe of the Apure and Orinoco rivers is considered dainty eating. The *caribito* is also a harmless pretty little fish, with back of a fine green color, and belly white with occasional streaks of pink.

In spite, however, of all these vicious creatures, and the great depth of the water, the fishermen accomplished their work in a manner that would have done credit to the fearless pearl-divers of the ocean, more especially the swimmers, who are constantly in danger from some of the fish while gliding through the water in their pursuit. Those in the canoes were, of course, less liable to be attacked, although it often happened that a *payara,* being peculiarly adapted for darting out of the water, would clear the nets with a spring and fall in the midst of the paddlers, causing a momentary confusion among them. My attention was particularly attracted to the skill of the men in throwing their hand nets, sometimes lying on their stomach on the surface of the water, their hands encumbered with the nets; others would stand perfectly

erect, half their bodies out of water, and without any footing to serve them as *point d'appui*. In the same manner, those whose business it was to drive the fish towards the seines, managed their huge batons, and all apparently without the least inconvenience. Suddenly their labors were interrupted by a serious obstacle in the shape of a *caiman* or alligator struggling hard between the nets to regain his freedom. Here was a sufficient test of the courage and ability of the fishers. If the monster remained, he would not only endanger the nets, but also the progress of the men through the water, they being liable at any moment to come in contact with his powerful jaws. It was therefore decided to get rid of the intruder at all hazards. To accomplish this, a lazo was procured, and to the astonishment of all the *blancos* present, a man went down with it to the bottom in search of the monster, with the avowed object of lazoing him under the water. After a few moments of, to us, most anxious suspense, but which the hardy fishermen regarded as child's play, their companion rose to the surface panting for breath, not yet having ascertained the precise position of his intended victim. After inhaling sufficient air, the diver again disappeared, coming up in due time with the glad tidings that the enemy was captured, in proof whereof he handed us the other end of the lazo that we might drag him out. This was no easy task, as these reptiles, by their peculiar conformation, have immense power while under water, and it required the united efforts of all on shore to land him. This accomplished, we were perplexed in what manner to despatch him, as no steel

instrument can penetrate the thick cuirass of the *caiman*, except it be in the armpits; but so violent were his struggles, that it was impossible to strike him there. At last the Doctor, more sagacious than the rest of us in anatomical operations, plunged a harpoon into the nape of the neck. The effect was that of paralyzing at once the movements of the prisoner, after which he was easily stabbed.

The manner in which our gallant diver accomplished his daring feat was thus explained by his companions; the *caiman*, like the domestic hog, is said to delight in being scratched about the ribs,* and of this the diver perhaps availed himself in order to place the noose around his neck, being very careful to approach him from behind, as it is a well-known fact that these reptiles, owing to the nature of their collar vertebræ, cannot easily turn round. The alligator is not so dangerous as its congener the crocodile of the Orinoco and its tributaries; few real crocodiles ever ascend the Guarico as far as San Pablo. However, a case had occurred here not long before, when a man disappeared under rather mysterious circumstances, and there was good reason to surmise that his loss was due to one of these gentry. It appears that the seines, being entangled around a snag at the bottom of the river, a man was, as usual, sent to remove the obstruction; considerable time elapsing without his reappearance, his comrades, seriously alarmed, instituted a diligent search, but no vestige of the unfortunate man was ever discovered. It never oc-

* Since the above first appeared in print, I find this fact corroborated by Sir J. Emerson Tennent, in his interesting "Sketches on the Nat. Hist. of Ceylon," as practised by the natives of that island.

curred to his friends that he might have fallen a prey to a crocodile, and the calamity was universally ascribed to the supernatural influence of some evil genii of the deep. From that time, the spot has borne the ominous name of the *Encantado* or haunted pool.

All obstructions to the progress of the nets were at length removed, and a sufficient quantity of fish having been taken therefrom, we all assisted in pulling them in, and a few moments afterwards had the satisfaction of beholding the sand banks on which we were, strewn with the proceeds of the two seines.

It would be impossible to convey an adequate idea of the singular forms and brilliant hues of most of these fish, all new to me. The *Cherna*, in particular, attracted my attention from their abundance and peculiar formation. Some attain a large size, weighing as much as a hundred pounds, and their flesh is so delicate as to deserve the appellation of river veal. The mouth is comparatively small, and set with a row of teeth bearing a strong resemblance to those of the human species.

The fishing having been solely for our amusement, and more game obtained than we required for our consumption, some was distributed among the people of the neighborhood who had collected to witness the sport, and the remainder given to the fishermen, who received besides a handsome compensation for their trouble in coming so far from their encampment.

During the distribution of the fish, a singular incident took place which illustrates at once the tenacity of life with which reptiles are endowed, and the electrical powers of that most singular creature, the

gymnotus or electric eel. A boy had discovered one of these among the heap of fish on the beach, and was dragging it along by means of a *bichero* to avoid the shocks, when the body of the eel came accidentally in contact with the carcass of the *caiman*. This last, which, after the rough treatment it had received from our medical adviser, was supposed to be quite dead, much to the surprise of all, opened his huge jaws and closed them with a loud crash. The Doctor, especially, who, from his professional knowledge in surgical operations, had pronounced it beyond recovery, was the loudest in his expressions of astonishment at this unexpected turn. It was, however, merely a convulsive movement, induced by contact with the eel, and similar to that produced on the limbs of a frog by a galvanic current; for, afterward, the reptile remained without further signs of returning life. Science will, ere long, take advantage of the electric eel.

I would here most willingly entertain my readers with an account of the nature and habits of these "animal electrical machines," had not the great Humboldt already elucidated the subject in the most comprehensive and brilliant manner. To his admirable works I will therefore refer the reader for a full and graphic description of this, one of the most curious of fish. It was in one of the numerous tributary creeks of this river, that the distinguished traveller procured the gymnoti for his experiments; perhaps from amongst the progenitors of the above mentioned. The manner in which they were obtained differed somewhat, however, from the one adopted by us on this occasion. Knowing how difficult it was to catch these eels on account of their extreme agility and powerful electrical discharges, the guides collected in the savannas a drove of wild horses, which they forced into a pool of water abounding in gymnoti. "The extraordinary noise caused by the horses' hoofs makes the fish issue from the mud and excites them to attack. The yellowish and livid eels, resembling large aquatic serpents, swim on the surface of the water and crowd under the bellies of the horses and mules. A contest between animals of so different an organization presents a very striking spectacle. The Indians, provided with harpoons and long slender reeds, surround the pool closely, and some climb up the trees, the branches of which extend horizontally over the surface of the water. By their wild cries, and the length of their reeds, they prevent the horses from running away and reaching the bank of the pool. The eels, stunned by the noise, defend them-

selves by the repeated discharge of their electric batteries. For a long interval they seem likely to prove victorious. Several horses sink beneath the violence of the invisible strokes which they receive from all sides in organs the most essential to life; and stunned by the force and frequency of the shocks, they disappear under water."

"I wish," adds the traveller, "that a clever artist could have depicted the most animated period of the attack; the group of Indians surrounding the pond, the horses with their manes erect and eyeballs wild with pain and fright, striving to escape from the electric storm which they had roused, and driven back by the shouts and long whips of the excited Indians; the livid yellow eels, like great water snakes, swimming near the surface and pursuing their enemy; all these objects presented a most picturesque and exciting 'ensemble.' In less than five minutes two horses were killed; the eel, being more than five feet in length, glides beneath the body of the horse and discharges the whole length of its electric organ. It attacks, at the same time, the heart, the digestive viscera, and the cœliac fold of the abdominal nerves. I thought the scene would have a tragic termination, and expected to see most of the quadrupeds killed; but the Indians assured me that the fishing would soon be finished, and that only the first attack of the gymnoti was really formidable. In fact, after the conflict had lasted a quarter of an hour, the mules and horses appeared less alarmed; they no longer erected their manes, and their eyes expressed less pain and terror. One no longer saw them struck

down in the water, and the eels, instead of swimming to the attack, retreated from their assailants and approached the shore. The Indians now began to use their missiles; and by means of the long cord attached to the harpoon, jerked the fish out of the water without receiving any shock so long as the cord was dry."

The electric eel, although much dreaded by man, is greatly esteemed by gourmands. It is necessary, however, to deprive the fish of those parts constituting the electrical apparatus, which are rather spongy and unpalatable. So perfect a machine is this curious organ, that Faraday succeeded--by insulation of the animal electricity and a most ingenious apparatus devised by him—in obtaining a spark with which he ignited a spoonful of gunpowder. But there are several varieties of the fish which do not possess this peculiarity.

Among the promiscuous assemblage of fish scattered on the sand beach, ready to transfix the hand that might inadvertently touch them, were many sting-rays. This species, like its prototype the famous Manta-fish of the Caribbean Sea, is quite circular and flat, with a tail over a foot in length, very thick at the base and tapering towards the end. Near the middle on the upper part, it is armed with a long and sharp-pointed bone or sting, finely serrated on two sides, which the fish can raise or lay flat at will. When disturbed, the ray, by a quick movement of the tail, directs its sting towards the object, which it seldom fails to reach. The wound thus inflicted is so severe, that the whole nervous system is convulsed, the person becoming rigid and benumbed in a few

moments. Even long after the violent effects of the wound have subsided, the part affected retains a sluggish ulceration, which has in many instances baffled the skill of the best surgeons. Some creeks and lagoons of stagnant water are so infested with them, that it is almost certain destruction to venture into them. They usually frequent the shallow banks of muddy pools, where they may be seen at all times watching for prey; and, as if conscious of their powers, scarcely deign to move off when approached by man. They, also, are considered good eating, on which account they frequently fall a prey to hungry boys and vultures, who wage constant war upon them with spear and talon.

Mr. Thomas and I had plenty of occupation in sketching the various specimens before us; but the speedy approach of night compelled us to relinquish our agreeable pastime; thus many curious fish which we would have liked to preserve, had to be consigned to the frying-pan instead of to our portfolios.

In the mean time our able cook, Mónico, and half a dozen of Llanero assistants—all of whom are more or less accomplished in the art of cooking in their own peculiar style—were busily engaged throughout the afternoon preparing the spoils of the day for our supper. A fat calf was also killed in honor of the occasion, and roasted before a blazing fire under the trees. The Llaneros are quite skilled in roasting an ox or calf, which they divide in sections according to the flavor of each particular morceau. These they string upon long wooden spits, and keep them turning before the

fire until sufficiently cooked. The ribs of the animal, taken out entire, usually form the most favorite morsel; but I would recommend to future travellers in that country the *entreverado*, made up of the animal's entrails, such as the liver, heart, lungs, and kidneys, cut into pieces of convenient size and spitted; then enveloped in the fat mesenteric membrane of the animal, and cooked in its own juices.

In addition to this abundant supply of *carne asada*, we had fish in every style, smoked, broiled, *en sancocho*, (bouilli,) &c., with plenty of bread prepared by the wife and daughters of our equerry. Just as every one had eaten, as he supposed, his fill, one of our assistants made his appearance bending under the weight of a boiling caldron containing a rich bouilli of cherna heads, and urged us to partake of his humble fare. Although this was rather reversing the order of courses, we were finally prevailed upon to *taste* the soup he had prepared with so much care for us; and no sooner was the rich broth tasted by our epicurean party, than it was forthwith devoured with unimpaired appetites; but my enjoyment of the broth was somewhat spoiled by coming in contact with a row of omniverous-looking teeth, which so reminded me of a human skull, that I was constrained to throw my portion away, although I must confess that I never tasted soup superior to it.

CHAPTER VI.

WILD HORSES.

The fishing over, the main object of our expedition to La Yegüera was next attended to, namely, that of adding to our *madrina* of supernumerary horses from the abundant stock of this farm. An entire day was passed in riding through its enchanting groves and meadows, inspecting the numerous droves of mares, guarded by their proud *padrotes* or stallions. Each troop is under the control of one of these, who not only prevent their mingling with other packs, but endeavor also to appropriate all the other mares they can kidnap from their neighbors. The conquest, however, is not obtained without a determined resistance from their rightful lords, which occasions fierce combats between the rivals. When any stranger approaches, the whole troop boldly advances towards the object of their alarm, neighing, snorting, and throwing their slim and beautiful forms into the most graceful attitudes. When at the distance of a hundred paces, they all halt, and five or six scouts are detached from the main body to reconnoitre. These

approach still nearer, and stretching their necks and ears, seem, with wild glance and cautious movement, to inquire from the stranger the object of this intrusion, while, in the mean time, the stallion keeps the whole troop in readiness for retreat in case of pursuit. When this last occurs, the scouts hastily incorporate themselves with the main body, while the stallion orders the retreat as skilfully as a good general might under similar circumstances, stopping occasionally to watch the enemy's movements, but never resuming the lead until the troop is out of danger. When thus wildly coursing over the prairies in packs of one or two hundred, headed by their respective stallions, inspired, as it were, by the freedom of the plain, nothing can surpass their magnificent appearance, nor the proud air of liberty with which they snuff the passing breeze. We one day brought to the Ranch a large drove, from which we selected those required for the expedition. This occupied the men for a couple of days, as it was discovered that most of the animals were in bad condition from burrs and *garrapatas*, another destructive insect peculiar to those places, of the size and shape of a bed-bug, and very distressing to animals. It adheres with such tenacity to the skin of the poor brutes, that it requires to be pulled by hand in order to detach it; if left undisturbed, it will suck the blood until its body becomes distended to many times the natural size. It attacks all kinds of animals, but more especially horses: these last suffer in consequence, from malignant sores about their ears, which soon wither and drop off.

The horses were so wild that they had to be broken

in before they could be of any service. This operation—which might as well be termed breaking down horses, as a great number are ruined by it—affords the Llaneros a fine opportunity for testing their ability in coping with this, the most spirited animal in the world. It is also undoubtedly one of the most difficult performances on cattle-farms, requiring strong nerve and great skill on the part of the rider to withstand the kicks and plunges of the animal and retain his seat. The method practised in the Llanos differs but little from that of the Pampas of Buenos Ayres, so ably described by Sir Francis Head, Darwin, and other eminent writers. I will quote some passages from the first of these authors respecting this divertisement among the Gauchos; their method I specially commend to the numerous disciples of the renowned Rarey, who has so astonished the Old World and the New with his wonderful skill in horse-taming.

"The corral was quite full of horses, most of which were young ones, about three and four years old. The capataz, mounted on a strong, steady horse, rode into the corral, and threw his lazo over the neck of a young horse, and dragged him to the gate. For some time he was very unwilling to leave his comrades, but the moment he was forced out of the corral, his first idea was to gallop away; however, the jerk of the lazo checked him in a most effectual manner. The peons now ran after him on foot, and threw the lazo over his four legs, just above the fetlocks, and twitching it, they pulled his legs from under him so suddenly, that I really thought the fall he got had killed him. In an instant a Gaucho was seated upon his head, and

with his long knife, in a few seconds he cut off the whole of the horse's mane, while another cut the hair from the end of his tail. This they told me is a mark that the horse has been once mounted. They then put a piece of hide into his mouth to serve as a bit, and a strong hide-halter on his head. The Gaucho who was to mount, arranged his spurs, which were unusually long and sharp, and while two men held the animal by his ears, he put on the saddle, which he girthed extremely tight; he then caught hold of the horse's ear and in an instant vaulted into the saddle; upon which the man who was holding the horse by the halter, threw the end of it to the rider, and from that moment no one seemed to take any further notice of him. The horse instantly began to jump in a manner which made it very difficult for the rider to keep his seat, and quite different from the kick or plunge of an English horse; however, the Gaucho's spur soon set him going, and off he galloped, doing every thing in his power to throw his rider. Another horse was immediately brought from the corral, and so quick was the operation, that twelve Gauchos were mounted in a space which, I think, hardly exceeded an hour."

"It was singular to see the different manner in which the different horses behaved. Some would actually scream while the Gauchos were girthing the saddle upon their backs; some would instantly lie down and roll over it; while some would stand without being held, their legs stiff and in unnatural directions, their necks half bent towards their tails, and looking so vicious and sulky, that I could not help thinking I could not have mounted one of them for

any reward that could be offered me; and they were invariably the most difficult to subdue."

By repeating this treatment a number of times, and a sound thrashing with the *chaparro* whenever they prove refractory, the riders finally succeed in conquering the indomitable spirit of their steeds, although they long retain a vicious propensity to occasionally practise their old tricks, either by throwing themselves backwards upon their riders, or suddenly plunging headlong at a furious rate. Another dangerous habit is that of whirling rapidly, when least expected, in an opposite direction to the one intended by the rider, who, unless very expert, is unseated and liable to have his neck broken. But, when these horses are at length thoroughly broken in, there are few in the world capable of performing their duty so well as those trained in the Llanos of Venezuela.

My allusion on a former page to the renowned Rarey, recalls to my memory the name of Santos Nieves, a famous picador of San Pablo, whose ingenious mode of entrapping horses appears to have been formed on the same principle as that which has characterized Mr. Rarey's method.

Instead of dashing after the droves, with lazo in hand, and wild shouts, as is usual when the capture of one or more horses is intended, Santos Nieves made use of every precaution to avoid giving these shy creatures the least alarm; and so successfully were all his expeditions executed, that he achieved for himself the tremendous reputation of being a horse-witch. His plan was, however, the simplest possible. If the object was to capture only a single animal—which

feat is peculiarly difficult to accomplish in woody places especially—he made preparations as if for a long journey, previous to seeking the haunts of his intended captive. Having sojourned in San Pablo for over half a century, he was thoroughly acquainted with all their accustomed places of resort. The first impulse of the animal on finding himself followed, was to scamper off; but the patient picador, instead of hurrying in pursuit, quietly remained on the same spot, watching and waiting the next move of the animal. Presently the horse, seeing he was not pursued, would conclude to return and reconnoitre the object of his alarm. Satisfied from the quiet attitude of the man, that nothing need be feared from him, the horse resumed his brousing near by. Again the man cautiously and slowly advances, until perceived anew by the horse, who, as before, beats a rapid retreat. Impelled by curiosity, he returned for the third time; again inspects the picador, who remains motionless as before, upon seeing which, the animal concludes he may safely continue his meal. These manœuvrings, again and again repeated, usually occupied an entire day, towards the close of which, if the horse were not very scary, the picador, with cautious approach and gentle words, succeeded in placing the halter around his neck. The extreme coyness, however, of most of these animals, frequently compelled Santos Nieves to camp out for the night and resume his pursuit, not only the following morning, but, if necessary, for three or more consecutive days, at the end of which he always returned in triumph with his captive to the farm.

The relative value of these horses depends princi-

pally on their form, color, and gait. The Llaneros are quite skilful in teaching them a variety of paces and evolutions, which are as essential to their hazardous occupations, as is the helm to the mariner. For war purposes, they are especially invaluable, as was practically demonstrated in the long struggle with the Spaniards, who not being equally expert in the management of their steeds, were, in consequence, often at the mercy of their antagonists. A good charger must be endowed with an easy mouth, good wind, and quick movement to either side, so that when pursued by an enemy, he can be made to whirl suddenly to the attack if necessary. The same rule applies to those used in chasing wild animals, especially bulls, which, when hotly pursued, often face about and charge their assailants.

It is equally indispensable in warm climates, that a horse should possess an easy gait for travelling. In this respect, they are trained to the particular fancy or requirements of the rider. Some prefer a gentle trot on a long journey, as being the least fatiguing to the horse; but, for city riding, or short journeys, an amble, rack, or *pasitrote*—something between both—is usually adopted. The test of a good pacing horse consists in "the rider being able to carry a glass of water in his hand without spilling," while that of a first-rate charger is to stop, when at the height of his speed, on the slightest pull of the bridle.

Great regard is also paid to the color of horses; piebald, cream, and the various shades of white, are usually preferred. But, where great endurance and strength are requisite, connoisseurs generally select

those of a darker color. Their price in the country is greatly enhanced of late in consequence of a devastating disease, which has been raging among them for several years past. Horses were so plentiful in the Llanos at one time, that a large export trade in their hides was carried on with foreign countries. A good horse, which then only brought five dollars, now costs from eighty to one hundred, and even more, according to the fancy of the parties interested.—Great numbers of the inhabitants were also carried away by the same scourge, which swept over the land like the cholera, not even sparing the fish in the rivers.

This frightful epidemic, which the Llaneros have appropriately styled *Peste*, or plague, is supposed to have originated in the great primeval forest of San Camilo, at the head waters of the Apure, from decomposition of the vegetable detritus accumulated there during centuries. From thence, travelling eastward along the course of the river, the epidemic continued its ravages among the inhabitants of the towns and villages situated on the right bank, attacking first one place and then another, until the whole province scarcely escaped depopulation. Even when the mortality abated, the country, which until then had possessed a most healthful climate, never recovered its former salubrity; fevers of a more or less dangerous character prevail from that time, especially towards the end of the rainy season, while the raising of horses has been entirely abandoned in consequence.

The first symptoms of the epidemic appeared among the crocodiles, whose hideous carcasses might then be seen floating down the stream in such pro-

digious numbers, that both the waters and air of that fine region were tainted with their effluvium. It was observed that they were first seized with a violent fit of coughing, followed by a black vomit which compelled them to quit their watery home, and finally find a grave amongst the thickets on the river banks. The disease next attacked the fish and other inhabitants of the water, with equal violence, until it was feared the streams would be depopulated. The fearful mortality among them can be better estimated from the fact that, for more than a month, the rippling waves of that noble river, the Apure, were constantly washing down masses of putrefaction, its placid surface being by them actually hidden from view for several weeks.

The next victims were the pachidermata of the swamps, and it was a pitiable sight to see the sluggish *chigüires* (capyvaras) and the grizzly wild-boars dragging their paralyzed hind-quarters after them; hence the name of *derrengadera*, applied to this disease.

Not even monkeys in their aërial retreats, escaped the contagion, and their melancholy cries resounded day and night through the woods like wailings of the eternally lost.

It is a singular fact, that while the scourge did not spare any of the countless droves of horses roaming the savannas of the Apure, and adjacent plains, donkeys and horned cattle were seldom, if ever, attacked, so that, by their aid, the owners of cattle-farms were enabled to prevent the entire dispersion of their herds.

A curious incident related in connection with this

public calamity, is very current in the Llanos, respecting the origin of the disease among horses. Eugenio Torralva, a man of uncommon industry, although of humble extraction, had accumulated quite a handsome fortune by the raising of cattle, on the borders of La Portuguesa; but his chief wealth consisted in horses, on which he greatly prided himself—so much so that, on one occasion, while a distinguised personage was passing through his estate, Torralva directed his attention to the numerous droves grazing in the plains; then turning to his guest, who appeared equally delighted with the sight, said to him, "Think you, General, that I shall ever be in want of horses? *Ni que Dios quiera!* (Not even if God Almighty wished it!)" he blasphemously added. Two years later, the witness to this impious boast was again on his way to the Llanos: near San Juan he met an old man, apparently in a very destitute condition, riding a donkey. Not knowing who the wayfarer was, he bowed, as is customary, and rode on without taking further notice of the old man or his uncouth equipment; whereupon the stranger, waving his hand to him, cried, "Why, General, have you already forgotten your friend Torralva?" He that "giveth and taketh away" had deprived him of every horse, and the once wealthy farmer was now compelled to travel on an ass. It is asserted by the Llaneros that soon after he uttered the above-mentioned blasphemy, the *Peste* broke out among his immense stock, from whence they say the disease spread to other farms, until the contagion became general.

It is not a little singular that although the horse

was unknown to the aborigines of America, at the time of its conquest, the researches of Darwin and other eminent geologists have shown them to have existed in vast numbers on that continent contemporaneously with the Mastodon, Megatherium, Mylodon, and other extinct animals. "Certainly, it is a marvellous fact, in the history of mammalia," observes that assiduous explorer, "that in South America a native horse should have lived and disappeared, to be succeeded, in after ages, by the countless herds descended from the few introduced by the Spanish colonists!"

In general these animals are of middling size, and, like their progenitor, the Andalusian horse, endowed with a fiery spirit, (if not checked by ill-treatment or abuse,) and surprising endurance, especially during the exciting chase of wild cattle, when they are kept in constant motion for many consecutive days.

CHAPTER VII.

ACROSS THE PAMPAS.

Early in the morning of the fifth day, we left the Ranch at La Yegüera to journey southward, followed by our long train of baggage mules and relay horses, our good-natured host and keeper, Agapito, escorting us for some distance in the double capacity of guide and entertainer. Without his assistance it would have been difficult for us to proceed on our journey, which lay across a rolling prairie, covered in some places by magnificent groves of tall timber trees and a vast multitude of slender, towering palms, which, by the glimmering light of the stars, appeared like a mighty fleet of ships guarding the entrance to some giant harbor. Although the morning was dark, and there was properly speaking no road, but only a beaten track branching off in all directions, our guide, who knew every inch of the ground, led us on without once turning to the right or left, merrily chanting some of the lively ballads of the Llanos. Occasionally he was joined by other bards equally

distinguished for their powers of voice and versification, thus producing very animated choruses of a character peculiarly wild.

As the sun rose in the horizon, we came upon another extensive plateau, the Mesa del Rastro, stretching for several miles, unbroken by a single tree or shrub, but alive with numberless herds of cattle roaming in all directions, while flocks of birds of every plumage, all new to me, flew affrighted at our approach, filling the air with their wild, peculiar cries. Among these, the Taro-taro, a large bird of the Ibis tribe, which derives its name from its bell-like notes, and the Carretero or carter, a beautiful species of goose with variegated plumage and crimson bill, particularly attracted my attention. The latter is named from the rumbling noise it makes when on the wing, similar in sound to the rumbling of cart-wheels on hard ground.

Continuing our march over this seemingly interminable plain, we at length descried in the horizon the village of El Rastro, where we purposed breakfasting and spending the hottest part of the day. We were cordially received and entertained at the house of Señor Llovera, a wealthy neighbor of ours, whose lands extended from the southern boundary of San Pablo to this village.

El Rastro is noted for the beauty and fresh complexion of the women, in spite of an ardent climate; and the males for their singular propensity to abstract the hair from the manes and tails of horses stopping at their village. This they often practise under the very noses of the unfortunate owners, for the purpose

of converting it into halters for their own steeds. Thus many a fine animal, which is supposed to be securely quartered for the night, is found next morning so shamefully disfigured that he can scarcely be recognized by his owner, who swears by all the saints in the calendar to take summary vengeance on the first *rastrero** who may chance to cross his path. Fortunately we had no cause of complaint, as our droves were constantly under the *surveillance* of a dozen or more vigilant keepers, perfectly *au fait* to the peculiar taste of that community.

The beautiful complexion of the women is the more extraordinary from the fact that this village, which stands on the southern edge of the plateau, is entirely exposed to the glare of a tropical sun, and the hot breezes of the east. I nowhere met during my journey, such rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes as in this miserable hamlet. I could almost fancy them the fairies of the wilderness, bewitching the unsuspecting traveller, while their perfidious helpmates practise their rascally tricks.

These high terraces possess the advantage of being free from those noxious exhalations which render the plains below so unhealthy at certain seasons. Owing to the nature of the soil, mostly composed of a loose conglomerate or shingle, no permanent deposits of stagnant water are formed, endangering the health of the inhabitants, who are often blessed with a "green old age" and the possession of unimpaired mental and bodily faculties. Many are the instances where

* *Rastrero*—a native of El Rastro—literally, a mean rogue.

men attaining seventy and eighty years are still able to take part in the hardy ventures of the country along with their more youthful companions. Among our own party we had several individuals of this class who, after experiencing all the vicissitudes of a destructive war, had seen many a hot summer roll by, and camped out amidst the drenching showers of the rainy season, without any material change in their physique. Of these were Santos Nieves, the horse tamer, whose only food consisted of jerked beef, cheese, and *papelon*, upon which he had thrived admirably up to the age of seventy; Crisóstomo, the negro major domo of San Pablo, who had lost all recollection of his earlier days; Conrado, the horse driver, whose age and experience in conducting our refractory *madrinas* had entitled him to the revered appelation of *taita* or father. But the most extraordinary instance of longevity which has come to my ears, is in the Monagas family, also hailing from those regions, the age and number of whose members seriously alarmed the republic at one time; for the multitude of their rapacious demands appeared endless. The patriarch of the family is said to have attained the moderate age of one hundred and twenty years, yet was able to scour the savannas on horseback after the cattle up to the time of his death. The memorable José Tadeo, the late Dictator and tyrant of the republic, is yet in his prime at the age of seventy-nine, while his brothers Gregorio and José Francisco, whose vandalic career of plunder and assassination was—happily for the country that gave them birth—cut off by a late revolution, did not

show the least signs of unabated vigor at the time of their death, although one of them was considerably older than Tadeo. And last, though not least, the renowned zambo general, Sotillo, the pet bull-dog of the family, to which, however, he bears no other relationship than that existing among rogues of the same stamp: although then in his eightieth year, he was able to carry on a successful partisan warfare against the existing government. Without a roof to shelter him, and no other equipment of war than the lance and horse, this savage chieftain, for such he is by birth and education, has set at defiance all the forces sent in his pursuit, and nearly brought the country to the verge of barbarism in his strivings to uphold the iniquitous claims of this rapacious family. Fierce in looks and menacing in tone, with a head more like a polar bear than a South American savage, he has become for a long time the terror of the eastern provinces, which are in constant dread of his sudden attacks—now cutting off small detachments of troops and defenceless individuals, now retreating to his fastness amidst the arid plains of the Alto Llano at the approach of a superior force. He has even succeeded in defeating such on two or three occasions by his cunning manœuvring and the rapidity of his movements. During half a century, his favorite occupation has been hunting wild cattle and waging a guerilla warfare against society, which too often has been compelled to yield to the savage demands of this Bedouin of the Llanos.

Having partaken of a substantial breakfast, we

bade adieu to our kind host, and again betook ourselves to our long and weary journey across the Pampas. Descending to the plain, stretching for a thousand miles to the foot of the Bolivian Andes, we at once entered into an entirely different country, showing unmistakable proofs of a diluvial origin. The soil, mostly a mixture of clay and sand, no longer offended the feet of our horses with those extensive beds of pebbles so trying to the poor beasts. The vegetation, also, whenever favored by some accident of the ground, showed a marked difference in character. The thorny mimosas, which only thrive in a gravelly soil, here disappeared altogether, and were replaced by dense groves of laurel and other balsamiferous trees. The Copernicia palms, so extensively used for thatching and other economic purposes, reappeared at first in a few scattered clumps, and afterwards in countless multitudes, literally closing the perspective with their tall, slender trunks. This beautiful palm is known in the country under various names, according to the uses made of its separate parts. These are almost as numerous as the leaves of its dense, symmetrical foliage. Thus, by the rural architect of the Llanos, it is called *palma de cobija*—thatch palm. When its leaves are plaited and neatly braided into hats that never wear out, it bears the name of *palma de sombrero;* and when the same are employed in driving off the myriads of flies that infest the premises, or in fanning the heated dweller in those regions, it is called *palma abanico;* and so on through a long catalogue.

A house thatched with this palm is not only im-

pervious to the pouring showers of the tropics, but against fire also, as it is nearly incombustible: a hot coal dropped on it will only burn slowly where it falls, without spreading or raising any flame. It is, moreover, very durable and cool throughout the hottest months. All the fences and corrals of the region where it abounds are made of the entire trunks of this palm, while the cattle find a grateful shelter under its dense shade. The slowness of its growth, observable even after centuries have elapsed, is another curious peculiarity of this palm. When Europeans first penetrated this wild region, they found extensive tracks covered with low, apparently stunted plants, a few inches only above ground. According to the recollection of the oldest inhabitants, of whom there are many in the country, as I have already stated, these dwarfish palm forests have not altered very perceptibly during their lives. It must therefore have taken a full-grown plant thousands of years to attain the height of twenty feet, which is their average size.

Emerging from these extensive *palmares*—palm forests—we again found ourselves in the midst of the boundless plain, assuming here as desolate an aspect as if fire had passed over its entire surface, a dreary waste of dried-up swamps, parched by the burning sun. Dismal tracts of these *terroneros*, as they are termed, lay before us, having the appearance of an extensive honey-comb, over which our jaded beasts stumbled at every step, increasing our weariness to a state almost bordering on desperation. The action of the rains washing the earth from around the grass tufts, which are afterwards parched and hardened by

the heat of the sun, leaves the surface of the ground covered with numerous little clumps of indurated clay, so closely packed that there was no footing for the animals.

Even the cattle seemed to have forsaken this inhospitable region, for, with the exception of a few stragglers, there were no signs of animation. Most of the cattle are transferred at this season to the fertile shores of the Apure and Portuguesa; or they abandon of their own accord these dreary wastes for well-known streams where they allay their thirst. Ours was intense on this occasion, while the tantalizing mirage, that singular atmospheric phenomenon so peculiar to arid deserts, haunted us incessantly with its rippling, vapory phantom, a feeling in which our poor beasts seemed to participate, as with outstretched necks and ears they snuffed in vain the far horizon in search of the reviving element. By an unpardonable oversight, our men had neglected to fill their gourds with water, and now we felt the want of it.

These scenes have been described so graphically by the eloquent pen of Humboldt, in his "Tableaux de la Nature," that I will not attempt it further, but refer my reader to the following:

"When under the vertical rays of the never-clouded sun, the carbonized tufty covering falls into dust, the indurated soil cracks asunder as if from the shock of an earthquake. If at such times two opposing currents of air, whose conflicts produce a rotary motion, come in contact with the soil, the plain assumes a strange and singular aspect. Like conical-shaped clouds, the points of which descend to the

earth, the sand rises through the rarified air in the electrically charged centre of the whirling current, resembling the loud waterspout dreaded by the experienced mariner. The lowering sky sheds a dim, almost straw-colored light on the desolate plain; the horizon draws suddenly near; the steppe seems to contract, and with it the heart of the wanderer. The hot, dusty particles which fill the air, increase its suffocating heat, and the east wind blowing over the long-heated soil brings with it no refreshment, but rather a still more burning glow. The pools, which the yellow, fading branches of the fan palm had protected from evaporation, now gradually disappear. As in the icy north the animals become torpid with cold, so here, under the influence of the parching drought, the crocodile and the boa become motionless and fall asleep, deeply buried in the dry mud. Everywhere the death-threatening drought prevails, and yet, by the play of the refracted rays of light producing the phenomenon of the mirage, the thirsty traveller is everywhere pursued by the illusive image of a cool, rippling, watery mirror. The distant palm bush, apparently raised by the influence of the contact of unequally heated, and therefore unequally dense strata of air, hovers above the ground, from which it is separated by a narrow intervening margin."

Indeed, so perfect was this illusion of the mirage, that on one occasion Mr. Thomas and myself were entirely deceived by the appearance of a beautiful lake which we prepared to sketch. But what was our surprise when, on climbing a tree to obtain a better view, the phantom disappeared as if by magic! This occurs

whenever the spectator places himself above the line of the natural horizon.

At length we reached a solitary pool of muddy water in the midst of the savanna, which was hailed with joy by man and beast; but, on nearer inspection, the thirsty travellers were seized with disgust and disappointment on seeing several dead and dying animals embedded in the mud. These quagmires form extensive barriers in some places, especially in dried-up creeks where hundreds of animals perish every year, being unable to extricate themselves from the adhesive quality of the clay. At our approach two hideous alligators rushed into the pond, and thus the scanty portion that had not been disturbed by the tramping of animals was in a moment thickened like the rest. However, there being no other alternative, we were compelled to follow the example of our sturdy Llaneros, who proceeded without much consideration to dip their calabashes into that species of mud soup; then covering the mouths of the *totumas* with our handkerchiefs, we sucked through them this miserable substitute for water.

About noon we descried a speck in the horizon, looking like a sail at sea. Increasing in size as we neared it, it soon appeared to be a solitary mound or promontory; by degrees it assumed more distinctness, finally presenting to our view all the luxuriance of tropical vegetation. This was the Mata de San Pedro, a sort of island grove of splendid forest trees, which, like a veritable oasis, stood in the midst of those desert plains, a relief to the parched and wayworn traveller. *Mata* is the name by which the

natives designate these lovely gems of the Pampas, no less cherished than are those of the famed African Desert by the wearied caravan; like them, they receive appropriate names from some peculiarity of feature or other trivial cause, as Mata Gorda, Mata Redonda, &c. But whatever be the name, all hail with joy these verdant bowers, a cool retreat to every species of animal in summer, and a safe refuge during the season of floods, for, being somewhat higher than the surrounding country, they are rarely overflowed by the periodical inundations.

It was entirely dark on our arrival at the Mata, and we were then so weary that there was little inclination evinced to make any preparations for supper, and we were also greatly in need of water. Although the earth was parched by the long drought, Providence has placed a few feet below the surface an unlimited supply of the purest water. This can be obtained at any time by merely digging for it with a wooden pole sharpened at one end. In the present instance we were spared this trouble, as some of our people, well acquainted with the place, knew where one of these primitive wells could be found. Our first business, therefore, was to seek for the *jagüey* in spite of the deadly rattlesnakes said to abound there. From this we obtained sufficient water for ourselves and riding horses, the other animals being left to shift for themselves, always under the close vigilance, however, of the watchmen appointed for the night. These men had a hard task: apart from the fatigue of keeping awake and on horseback all

night, they were in constant fear of a sudden stampede among the horses, which not unfrequently occurs. To provide against a contretemps of the sort, those in immediate use were secured nightly by straps attached to the feet, which prevented their straying far from the camp.

We rose very early, judging from the height of the *Lucero* or morning star—which in those solitudes takes the place of town clock—whose brilliancy almost equals that of the full moon. I nowhere recollect having seen this gorgeous luminary of morning shed such radiant streams of light as in the ever-cloudless sky of the Llanos during the summer months. In equal proportion all the other heavenly bodies seem there to vie with each other in heightening the splendor of that glorious firmament, cheering the heart of the wanderer who finds himself, like the mariner on the high seas, encompassed only by the vault of heaven, whose glowing lamps were then our unerring guide towards the south, enabling us to dispense with compass or any landmarks by which to direct our course. Towards evening, we deviated a little from it, hoping to reach a cattle-farm, intending to pass the night there; but our horses being almost exhausted from the roughness of the ground, compelled us to stop by the banks of a treeless creek abounding in alligators; this we knew by the strong odor of musk which pervaded the air. In spite of their proximity, which made me start more than once in my dreams, we slept soundly in our ponchos on the hard ground, for want of trees from which to sling our hammocks. This lack of firewood compelled us also

A PRAIRIE ON FIRE.

to go supperless that night and without breakfast next morning. After a long search we finally succeeded in collecting a handful of drift wood along the banks of the creek, enabling Monico to make us a stimulating cup of coffee in which to "drown our sorrows."

Midday brought us to the cattle-farm we were in quest of, when immediate preparations were made for an ample meal, which should compensate us for previous privations. The overseer informed us that not far from the house was a herd of cattle bearing our brand. Thither we despatched two men in search of the fattest among them. In a short time they returned with a fine cow, which was speedily slaughtered and spitted before a blazing fire kindled under three stupendous mimosa trees bearing flat, kidney-shaped legumes or pods six inches in circumference. Our hunger appeased, we spread our ponchos under the shade of these giants of the vegetable world, and slept until noon, when we were again in our saddles prosecuting the journey through a less monotonous landscape. The plain, although still preserving the same rough character, was diversified with groves of other leguminous trees, (Cañafistulos,) the pods of which were nearly three feet in length, and contain a black pulp valuable as a cathartic.

Towards evening we were gratified by seeing, for the first time, that splendid spectacle, a prairie on fire. The grass, parched with the burning sun, is purposely fired by the natives to promote the growth of the new crop, which last, owing to the heavy dews, starts long before the rainy season sets in. The con-

flagration extended for more than three miles, the strong evening breeze driving it onward in curling fiery billows. Volumes of smoke loaded with burning particles of grass, ascended in clouds, increasing the grandeur and beauty of the scene by their various tints of red, pink, and purple, diffused throughout the atmosphere. Aided by this illumination, we were enabled to discover a solitary ranch, where we tarried the remainder of the night, although there was nothing to be had there in the shape of edibles. Fortunately one of our party had shot a number of wild ducks in a lagoon, and a provident individual had saved some choice morsels of the cow. There was some difficulty in procuring wood enough for a fire, but a couple of rafters from the old ranch afforded the needful fuel, and thus we were happily prevented passing a supperless, as well as comfortless night.

Many hours before daybreak we were again up, saddling and loading our animals, which, owing to the darkness, was always the most irksome part of the journey. We were, however, most happy to bid adieu to the solitary ranch with its myriads of bats, the only tenants we encountered there.

CHAPTER VIII.

LA PORTUGUESA.

Again we were under way, and again our eyes encountered only the flat monotonous plain on all sides sweeping to the horizon, varied only in being more barren, rougher, and consequently more exhausting to our horses than any of the preceding. Many of the riders dismounted, that the poor brutes might be relieved as much as possible, and accomplished the remainder of the journey on foot. This occasioned a burning thirst, which the scant supply of water in our gourds was not sufficient to allay; and it was not until noon had long passed, that our guides, pointing to a blue ridge of forest in the distance, informed us it marked the course of the river Portuguesa, our intended halting place, and on the borders of which we purposed spending several days. The cavalcade, inspirited by this view, pressed forward as rapidly as their exhausted condition would permit, and fortunately reached the pass before nightfall.

This beautiful river has its rise in the mountains

of Trujillo, and connects the fertile province of Barinas with the sea, through the Apure and Orinoco, being in fact one of the principal tributaries of the former. Its commercial advantages, as may be imagined, are of great importance to the interior of a country so distant from the ocean, and whose principal products consist in the bulky yield of the plantations. It is navigable during a great portion of the year, especially for steam vessels, and I am happy to learn that the great civilizer of the world—steam—has at length been introduced there through the enterprising energy of some Yankee speculators.

The banks of the river, being both high and precipitous, a passage to it can only be accomplished at certain points, where the hand of man and the tramp of animals have cut deep trenches, forming paths to the water's edge. On this occasion, we sought the pass of San Jaime, where a ferryman is stationed with a canoe to take across any who desire it. Horses, however, being excellent swimmers, are left to ferry themselves over. Our first care on arriving at the pass was to unload our beasts of burden, and unsaddle our steeds for the purpose of allowing them to cool before entering the water, a precaution which, if neglected, not unfrequently proves fatal to both man and beast. This duty fulfilled, we proceeded to hail the *Canoero*, whose ranch was perched upon the south bank of the river. The knowledge that he would receive a "real" for every man and beast that crossed, besides various perquisites from passengers whom he supplied with meals during their sojourn at his ranch, so expedited his motions, that in a few moments his frail

barge received its first load, each person taking his own chattels with him. A boy of fifteen, naked and sunburnt, paddled the canoe, while the ferryman steered it by means of his *canalete*. The utmost care was necessary to prevent the overturn of the crazy skiff, which reeled at every stroke of the paddle, threatening to pitch all its contents overboard. As soon as we landed on the opposite shore, the boat returned for a second load, and the trips were repeated until the whole party had crossed. There now only remained the horses, who being extremely shy of deep water, required to be forced to swim across, an operation demanding considerable skill on the part of the drivers. The only way was to give them an example; accordingly two expert swimmers, divesting themselves of clothes, jumped upon the bare back of their horses and plunged incontinently into the stream. Then, sliding off to one side, they allowed the horses to swim without encumbrance, supporting themselves with one hand upon the animal's haunches, while with the other they guided them by means of a halter. Meanwhile, those that remained on shore set up a tremendous shouting and yelling, at the same time shaking their ponchos violently with the intent to frighten all the rest of the troop down the steep embankment, where, encouraged at the sight of the two ahead, they all entered the stream and followed their leaders without further difficulty. Several large crocodiles, who had watched all these proceedings from the middle of the river, alarmed by the confusion, disappeared from view, and then the heads only of the leaders and their steeds rose, puffing and snort-

ing, above water. In spite, however, of all the uproar, one of these men was instantly attacked by caribes, and very narrowly escaped serious injury from them. I was standing at the time on the opposite side of the river, watching this novel mode of ferrying, and observed that the man, abandoning his horse, endeavored to reach the bank by long strides, occasionally lashing himself with a coiled lazo he carried in his hand. It immediately occurred to me that he might have been attacked by crocodiles, a belief which was strengthened on seeing the poor fellow's sides streaming blood as he stepped upon the beach. My first apprehension was quickly dispelled by his pointing to a circular wound on his shoulder, about the size of a quarter dollar, and to others as severe on various parts of his body, inflicted by caribes. Had the man been a less expert swimmer, or the water less agitated, the accident would undoubtedly have proved more serious; as it was, we were considerably alarmed for the fate of the other man, who, however, happily escaped unhurt.

The surprising boldness of these diminutive fish, naturally increased my anxiety to examine more minutely into their peculiarities, than I had yet the opportunity of doing. I therefore determined to procure fresh specimens, if possible. On a former occasion I had lost most of my trout hooks, but I still preserved some larger ones, mounted with copper wire, to be used in the rivers of the Apure; these I supposed proof against the teeth of any fish, and no sooner were we established in the ranch of the ferryman, than, taking my lines I hastened to the river accom-

panied by my English co-laborer, the artist. The hooks were baited with pieces of fresh beef, and dropped with great precaution near the shore. Scarcely did the bait touch the water, when it was seized by caribes. Without allowing them time, as it seemed, to get the whole of it between their jaws, we pulled in the lines, but, alas! minus hooks, as well as bait. On examination, we discovered that one of the hooks had been cut through, while the other was severed from the wire. Still, we persevered, but invariably with the same unfortunate result.

Greatly annoyed, I turned to question a Llanero, who stood near laughing at what he considered my simplicity. Another tapped me gently on the shoulder, and addressed me with "*Niño*, you might as well attempt to catch a rattlesnake by the tail" (a favorite expression among them) "as to think of hooking one of those chaps." What is to be done, then? for I must have at least a couple of these scoundrels, said I. "Who ever saw a genteel young gentleman like yourself, with a taste for such disgusting creatures?" he replied, imagining that I wanted them for eating. On my explanation that my object was simply to sketch and preserve them in spirits, they advised me to procure a piece of tough skin from the head of an ox which was then being slaughtered, and to suspend it from a strip of the same material. I immediately followed their instructions, and shortly repaired again to the river. Seating myself on the stern of the canoe, which was moored across the stream, I dropped my novel bait into the water, and watched for the result with the utmost interest. In

a moment a shoal of caribes collected around the bait and commenced attacking it voraciously. Finding the thick cartilage too tough even for their sharp teeth, and unwilling to give it up, they continued gnawing at it like so many little hyenas. When I imagined them to be fairly "stuck" through the thick skin, I lifted the whole concern over the side of the canoe, and had the satisfaction of seeing about a dozen of the fish dancing at the bottom of my barge. Finding this novel style of fishing rather easy and entertaining, I continued it until I was suddenly apprised into whose company I had thrust myself by feeling the heel of my left foot seized by one of the captives with such violence as caused me to drop my bait, with the vicious creatures that were hanging from it, into the river. My only thought now was how to contrive my escape, having the whole length of the canoe to traverse, and its floor paved with these ravenous little wretches. My first impulse was to spring overboard; but a moment's reflection convinced me that it would be a jump from the "frying pan into the fire." Placed thus, as it were, between Scylla and Charybdis, I again appealed to the ingenuity of my former advisers for deliverance. This they readily accomplished by a very simple contrivance, consisting of a gunny bag, which they spread over the gaping draught of fish. In a moment their sharp teeth were again at work, this time among the tough fibres of the bag, to which they clung with the tenacity of bull-dogs, thus enabling us to fish them out again without difficulty.

My biting experience of these little pests left me

in no mood to spare them, and I never missed an opportunity of provoking a bloody conflict among them. With this view I made it my daily business to scatter pieces of flesh in the river, which never failed in attracting great numbers to the spot. These devoured the meat in a few moments, after which, being themselves of a red hue, and mistaking each other for the meat, they continued the feast by devouring one another, until few of them remained alive. Thus I accomplished my revenge upon these cannibals of the finny tribe. The pike and the caribe are, I believe, the only fish which devour those of their own species when disabled. "As no one dares to bathe where it is found," remarks Humboldt in his travels, "it may be considered as one of the greatest scourges of those climates, in which the sting of the mosquitoes and the general irritation of the skin, render the use of baths so necessary."

Fortunately for mankind, these fish are subject to a yearly mortality during the heats of summer, when the water is deprived of a portion of the air it holds in solution. Their carcasses may then be seen floating on the water by thousands, while the beach is strewn with their bones, especially their bristling jaws, which render walking barefoot on the borders of lagoons extremely dangerous.

To judge from the incessant turmoil in the river at all hours of the night, besides evident proofs of their depredations during the day, I concluded that the havoc they commit on the other denizens of the water must be very great. Even the armor-clad crocodiles are not exempt from their attacks, when

wounded in their own quarrels, as they sometimes are, during the season of their loves, for even crocodiles are subject to jealousy, that other "green-eyed monster." *

The Waraun Indians, whom the first tribe of cannibals, the Caribs, compelled years ago to seek a refuge among the flooded lands of the great Delta of the Orinoco river, and who in consequence live in huts raised on posts above the water, without even the allotted space of dry ground to deposit their mortal remains, have adopted the curious custom of preserving the bones of their deceased relations suspended from the roof of their aerial dwellings ; but having no skilful anatomists among themselves to strip the body of the more perishable flesh, they avail themselves of the voracious habits of this fish for so essential a performance. For this purpose they tie the corpse with a strong rope, and plunge it in the water, securing the other end of the rope to one of the pillars upon which their dwellings rest : in less than twenty-four hours the skeleton is hauled out of the water perfectly clean, for the teeth of the caribe have stripped it of flesh, arteries, tendons, etc. Now all that the mourners have to do is to separate the bones, which they arrange with much care and nicety in baskets made for the purpose, gaudily ornamented with beads of various colors ; and so well have they calculated beforehand the space the bones will occupy in the funereal urn, that the skull, tightly adjusted against the sides of the basket at top, comes to be the lid of it.

* The eyes of crocodiles are green.

During the annual inundation of the savannas, when quadrupeds perish by thousands in the vernal deluge, the caribes have ample field for their voracity; but living animals are not exempted, for they prey with equal fierceness upon the young calves when wading through the marshes, and upon the mothers, whose udders they so mutilate, that the young ones frequently perish from lack of nourishment. The poor cattle lead about this season a truly miserable life. Those that escape the teeth of the caribe, the coil of the anaconda, that great water serpent, or the jaws of the equally dreaded crocodile, are in continual danger of falling a prey to the lion or the jaguar, while congregated upon the *bancos* and other places left dry amidst the rising waters. None, however, escape the tormenting sting of myriad insects which, until the waters subside, fill the air they breathe. Even at night, when all created beings should rest in peace, enormous vampires, issuing from the gloomy recesses of the forest, perch upon the backs of the sufferers and suck their life blood, all the while lulling them with the flapping of their spurious wings. In fact, it seems as if in these regions all the elements conspired against these useful creatures; for, after these varied evils have abated with the return of the dry season, the hand of man is also continually against them in harassing hunts, or in firing the ripe pastures which sweep their realms in devastating fury, driving them in consternation from the fields of their enjoyment.

The crocodiles of this river are noted for being the most savage and daring in the Llanos. Although

usually styled yellow caymans, to distinguish them from the common alligator, which is of a darker hue, they are in fact real crocodiles, with an acute snout, like those inhabiting the Nile and other celebrated rivers of Africa.

While walking along the banks of the Portuguesa, one may see these huge lizards collected in groups of half a dozen or more, basking in the sunshine near the water, with their jaws wide open until their ghastly palates are filled with flies or other creatures alighting within them. We tried in vain shooting them with guns; the reptiles were so wary, that the moment we took aim they rushed into the water. Being at a loss how to procure a subject for my pencil, I sought the advice of an old man, an angler by profession, who lived in one of the huts near the river. He agreed to let me have his canoe with his son to paddle it, and the requisite number of harpoons, providing I could obtain the assistance of an Indian boy from the neighborhood, who was a capital marksman with the bow and arrow. "What!" I exclaimed in astonishment, "do we expect to kill one of these monsters with so slight a thing as an arrow?" "No, Señorito," he calmly answered; "but you must first know where to find him under water before you can strike him with the harpoon; the arrow of which I speak is the kind we use in catching turtles." These arrows are constructed so as to allow the head, affixed to the shaft somewhat in the manner of a lance, to come off the moment it strikes an object in the water. A slender cord, several feet in length,

connects it with the shaft, which last is made of a light, buoyant reed; around this the cord is wound closely until it reaches the point where the head is, then fastened securely. The shaft being extremely light, floats on the surface of the water the moment it is set free from the head by the struggles of the animal, thus acting as a guide for its recovery.

The old angler then proceeded to explain that the operation must be conducted first by sending one of these arrows into the body of the crocodile to mark his position under water; and then, if practicable, we might plunge a harpoon into the only vulnerable spot we could hope to reach, viz., the nape of the neck, after which the animal could be easily dragged on shore by means of strong ropes attached to the harpoon.

Accordingly, I went in search of the Indian boy, whom I found under a tree, seated like a toad on his haunches, skinning a porcupine he had just killed. At my approach he raised his head and fixed on me his unmeaning eyes. When spoken to, he only replied to all my questions with the monosyllables, *si*, *no*. After a little coaxing, and the promise of some fish hooks, he followed me to the canoe without uttering a word more. We were not long in getting a chance to test the skill of my new acquaintance. As we approached the river banks, a large crocodile hove in sight, floating down the stream like a log of wood. Our position was most favorable to send an arrow rattling through his scales, and my young Nimrod lost no time in improving the opportunity. Stepping a few paces in advance, and bending gracefully over

the precipice, he let fly at the reptile's head his slender, yellow reed, *por elevacion*, viz., shooting the arrow up into the air at an angle of forty-five, which causes it to descend with great force upon the object, after describing an arc of a circle in the manner of a bomb-shell. Although the distance was fully three hundred paces, the arrow struck the mark with the precision of a rifle ball. A violent plunge of the huge reptile was my first intimation that the trial had been successful, and a moment after I perceived the golden reed, now attached to him, skimming swiftly over the surface of the water. We hastened for the canoe, and immediately gave chase up the stream, as the crocodile had taken that direction. We were rapidly gaining upon him, when, alarmed at the sound of the paddles, he sunk in very deep water, as was indicated by the reed. This circumstance rendered it impossible to employ our harpoon. We tried in vain to start him; he stuck to the muddy bottom whence neither pulls nor curses could move him. We hoped that in time he would come to the surface to breathe, and then we might strike him with a harpoon; but in this we were equally disappointed. After waiting for him two hours, we gave him up, along with the arrow head sticking in his own.

I made various other attempts to secure a specimen, but with no better result, as the river was yet too high to sound for them.

While in this place, I was told several incidents in relation to the cunning and instinct of these saurians, one of which appeared to me most remarkable in an animal of the reptile tribe. The ferryman here

possessed at one time a great many goats. One day he perceived that several of them had disappeared, and not being able to account for it in any other way, he at once laid the blame on the hated crocodiles, although these creatures seldom carry their attacks beyond their own element. His suspicions, he discovered in the end, were well founded, having witnessed the destruction of one of his goats in a very singular manner. It appeared that a crocodile had in some mysterious way discovered that goats delight in jumping from place to place, but more especially from rocks or mounds. Rocks, however, being rather scarce in the country, their treacherous enemy undertook to gratify their taste for this innocent pastime, and at the same time cater to his own. Approaching the water's edge to within a few feet from the bank, he swelled out his back in such a manner as gave it the appearance of a small island or promontory. The stupid goats perceiving this, varied their gambols by jumping from their secure places on shore upon the seeming island, which they, however, never reached, for the crocodile, tossing up his head at the right instant, received them into his open jaws, and swallowed them without difficulty.

Crocodiles have a special penchant for dogs also, and never miss an opportunity of gratifying their taste for the canine. In this, however, they are often balked by the superior cunning of their intended titbits. One day I observed a couple of tiger-hounds quietly enjoying a cool bath in the river. Struck with their apparent *nonchalance* when in such a dangerous proximity, I found on inquiry that these an-

imals never approach the water, either to drink or to bathe, without previously attracting the crocodiles by means of repeated howlings to some distant spot. This instinct of the dog with regard to crocodiles seems to be rather of antique date, for I find it recorded in the writings of both ancient and modern travellers in different parts of the world.

No person can venture near the water without danger from their attacks, being so treacherous that they approach their intended victim near enough to strike him with their powerful tails before he is even aware of their proximity. The bubbling sound of a gourd being filled in the water by some imprudent person, specially attracts them. To obviate this danger, a calabash bowl with a long wooden handle is usually employed for the purpose; yet, even this is not unfrequently snatched from the hands of the water-carrier. If by accident a human being falls a prey to this tyrant of the river, the reptile is then called *cebado*, which appellation implies every thing that is bold, ferocious, and treacherous in an animal of the species, as from that time they not only waylay persons, but follow them in the canoes, in hopes of again securing this dainty morsel. There are, however, men bold enough to meet the enemy face to face in his own element. The man who makes up his mind to this encounter is well aware that this must be a conflict to the death for one of the antagonists. The ferryman related to us a feat of gallantry worthy of a better cause, performed here by a Llanero with one of these monsters. The man was on his way to San Jaime on a pressing errand. Being in haste

to get there the same day, he would not wait for the canoe to be brought to him, but prepared to swim across, assisted by his horse. He had already secured his saddle and clothes upon his head, as is usual on similar occasions, when the ferryman cried out to him to beware of a *caiman cebado*, then lurking near the pass, urging upon him, at the same time, to wait for the canoe. Scorning this advice, the Llanero replied with characteristic pride, "Let him come; I was never yet afraid of man or beast." Then laying aside a part of his ponderous equipment, he placed his two-edged dagger between his teeth, and plunged fearlessly into the river. He had not proceeded far, when the monster rose and made quickly towards him. The ferryman crossed himself devoutly, and muttered the holy invocation of *Jesus, Maria y José!* fearing for the life, and, above all, for the toll of the imprudent traveller. In the mean time, the swimmer continued gliding through the water towards the approaching crocodile. Aware of the impossibility of striking his adversary a mortal blow unless he could reach the armpit, he awaited the moment when the reptile should attack him, to throw his saddle at him. This he accomplished so successfully, that the crocodile, doubtless imagining it to be some sort of good eating, jumped partly out of the water to catch it. Instantly the Llanero plunged his dagger up to the very hilt into the fatal spot. A hoarse grunt and a tremendous splash showed that the blow was mortal, for the ferocious monster sunk beneath the waves to rise no more.

Proud of this achievement, and scorning the tardy

assistance of the ferryman, who offered to pick him up in his canoe, he waved his bloody dagger in the air, exclaiming, as he did so: "Is there no other about here?" and then turning, he swam leisurely back to take his horse across.

The *canoero* who related this adventure then added: "So delighted was I on that occasion, that I killed my fattest hen to treat the man to a good *sancocho*, for the caiman had devoured all my goats."

But this is only one of the many exploits constantly being enacted in these regions, by the bold race of men inhabiting them.

There is still living at San Fernando, a town at the confluence of the Apure and Portuguesa rivers, another individual equally bold in attacking crocodiles, in which warfare he uses only a wooden mace or club. He is possibly one of the greatest swimmers

in that or any other country, having repeatedly accomplished the run between San Fernando and El Diamante—a plantation which he owns three miles below the town—without once stopping on the way. Armed with his heavy club in one hand, and a bottle of rum in the other, to keep himself in good spirits, this modern Hercules will, for the fun of it, during a spree, provoke a fight with a *caiman cebado;* and so effectual has been his warfare, that he has actually succeeded in driving them away from the pass, formerly so infested by them, that scarcely a year elapsed in which numbers of persons were not carried off by them, helpless washerwomen especially.

I observed, also, at La Portuguesa, a great number of fresh-water porpoises or *toninas*, as they are called there, swimming with rapidity against the current, and bending their backs gracefully like their congeners of the sea. Crocodiles appeared to avoid them, and would invariably dive out of the way at their approach. It is probable that from this circumstance arose the current belief that *toninas* will befriend persons when they chance to fall into the water, against the attacks of crocodiles. It is, moreover, asserted that these cetacea will rescue a man from drowning, pushing him on to the shore with their snouts. In acknowledgment of this animal philanthropy, the hand of man is there never raised against these inoffensive creatures ; and so conscious are they of this, that they seem rather to delight in his neighborhood, sporting around the canoes which ascend the river, and spouting jets of water and compressed air like miniature whales.

CHAPTER IX.

THE APURE RIVER.

We tarried several days at La Portuguesa to afford our horses time to recover from the fatigues of the previous rough journeys. We also expected to incorporate there another drove, which having been kept throughout the summer grazing in the ever-verdant meadows of this river, were now in very fine condition. In the mean time, we were agreeably occupied in hunting, fishing and dancing; the people of the neighborhood being sufficient for our social entertainments.

Every morning we rode out to the savannas to hunt an ox for our meals. The remainder of the day was occupied in scouring the adjacent woods and plains after our steeds, who seemed as if conscious of the life that awaited them beyond La Portuguesa; for it required all the ingenuity and sagacity of the Llaneros to discover their hiding-places, and bring them again to the corrals. The evenings were devoted to dancing and singing by the light of half a

dozen *candiles*, or lamps made of burned clay, and filled with the grease of crocodiles. The habitations being considerably scattered along the banks of the river, we employed a number of runners for the purpose of bringing the company to the *fandango*, as these nocturnal revelries are called, who came in canoes or wading through the mud as occasion required.

And now, refined and courteous reader, picture to yourself a motley assemblage, brought together without any regard to color, age, or position, under an open shed or barracoon dimly lighted, and you will form an idea of our *soirées dansantes*, which for merriment and courtesy might with good reason have been the envy of the most polished *reunions*.

The orchestra was composed of a guitar scarcely larger than the hand that twanged it, a banjo of huge proportions, and a couple of noisy *maracas*, rattle-boxes made from the shell of the calabash fruit, and filled with the seed of a Marantha or Indian shot. No music is considered complete without this accompaniment, which, as well as I could judge, filled the place of castanets, or the less romantic "bones" of negro minstrelsy. A wooden handle is attached to each, to enable the performer to shake them to and fro, which he does with appropriate gestures and contortions expressive of his different emotions. A corresponding choir of singers, picked from our own suite, was attached to the players. All Llaneros are passionately fond of music, and display considerable talent, composing many beautiful songs of a national character, called *tonos* or *trovas llaneras*. Few in

the country are not gifted with the power of versification, and there are among them many famous *improvisatori.* Whenever two of these are brought together, a competition for the laurel crown is the invariable consequence. This amicable strife sometimes occupies several successive hours, ending only when one of the bards is fairly silenced by the other; the victor is then declared the *lion* of the fête and receives accordingly not only the congratulations of his admirers, but also secures the smiles of the most sparkling eyes in the company. It is really surprising to see men, who cannot distinguish one letter of the alphabet from another, compose and extemporize poetry which, although rude in character, is nevertheless full of interest and significance. Most of their songs and ballads refer to deeds of valor performed by their own heroes; while others recount their love adventures, and daily struggles with the wild and unsubdued nature which surrounds them. Their instruments, when handled with skill, produce very harmonious sounds. The *bandola* or banjo bears no resemblance to the one in common use among the negroes of the States. It is, in fact, a guitar of large proportions, shaped somewhat like the lute of old. The guitar of the Llanos is the reverse of its associate the banjo, being considerably smaller and with only five strings, on which account it is called *Cinco.* Still, it is a very noisy little instrument, all its cords being made to resound at once by running the fingers of the right hand up and down over them, while those of the left stop them at the right moment.

The dancers do not grapple with each other, as is

the practice among some of the more enlightened, but dance alone, joining hands occasionally for a few moments, and then separating and whirling round by themselves. First, a woman paces round the room in double-quick step, looking for a partner; when a suitable one is found, a graceful waving of the handkerchief summons him before her; then both go through their evolutions until the woman chooses to withdraw. The man then with a polite bow invites a second partner, and so on to the end of the first dance. This is styled the *Galeron*, in which only the most skilful dancers take part, as it requires great flexibility of joint and limb to execute all the intricate and graceful posturings and swayings of the body, constituting the principal charm of the performance. They have a variety of other dances, such as *La Maricela*, *El Raspon*, *La Zapa*, &c., all of which, however, are of the same character, the chief difference being in the *double entendre* of the stanzas sung as accompaniment to the music. *La Maricela*, especially, is a very exciting dance, from the satirical *bon mots* hurled by the bard of the evening at each couple as they pass. The facility with which these verses are improvised is most amusing, and would even astonish the most accomplished Neapolitan *improvisatore*. Some of them are capital hits upon the personal appearance, &c., of the dancers, and none fail to find some point for ridicule.

Three or four days we sojourned among these jolly people, and then again set out for the scene of our future adventures, stopping for the night at San

Jaime, once a thriving town, but now nearly deserted in consequence of the desolating civil wars which have afflicted the country for several years. On our way thither, we traversed a succession of beautiful prairies, bound by rings of magnificent forest trees, and watered by numerous creeks and lagoons filled with water fowl. Unlike the dreary wastes we had already crossed, which, "like the ocean, fill the imagination with the idea of infinity," the plains stretching between the Portuguesa and Apure rivers are characterized by the rankness and luxuriance of the vegetation. Owing to the periodical inundation, the landscape wears here the green mantle of spring even during the hottest months.

This yearly inundation is one of the most curious phenomena of this region. At the approach of the rainy season, those two magnificent offsprings of the Sierra Nevada, the Apure and Portuguesa, tired as it were of their long repose, suddenly rise in their heated, muddy beds, and leap over their borders, at first in playful gambols; then in fearful and rapid course, converting these widely extended plains into a vast lagoon. To the few spots which escape the general submersion, the inhabitants retire with their chattels and flocks in canoes held in readiness for the purpose.

Thus the land is kept in a state of constant irrigation and fertility unsurpassed in any country, although at the expense of the comfort of the inhabitants, who are compelled to abandon their homes to the crocodiles and anacondas of the stream. When the waters subside, the intruders are expelled by the rightful

owners of the dwellings; the few articles of furniture they possess replaced in the damp rooms, and they again devote themselves to domestic pursuits until the next inundation forces them anew to seek a home elsewhere. I was shown at the pass the marks left by the water on the walls of the cottages, indicating in some instances a rise of twelve feet.

I was struck with the size and luxuriance of the trees along the course of these rivers. My attention was particularly attracted by the *saman*, a species of Mimosa, with delicate, feathery flowers of a pinkish hue, and gigantic, umbrella-shaped boughs. There is in the valleys of Aragua one of these which, from time immemorial, has elicited the admiration of travellers, and received the protection of the law since the discovery and settlement of the country, for its magnificent proportions and the great age which it is supposed to have attained.

Extensive tracts of land are entirely taken up by individuals of this class. It would be impossible to conceive any thing more grand in nature than a forest of these trees. It might be said of them that each is a forest in itself; and were all the beautiful parasites that cling to their trunks and branches for support spread upon the ground, they would cover several acres. All along the course of the great rivers Apure, Guarico, and Portuguesa, the *saman* is found in such countless numbers that the combined fleets of the civilized world might be reconstructed from this inexhaustible supply. The axe of the northerner could readily convert those stupendous forests into vehicles

of commerce and civilization, were it not for the wasting fevers, endemic of that region. Now they only serve as protective haunts for desperate bands of robbers and cut-throats, let loose by unprincipled politicians.

Equally rank and luxuriant are the grasses in these alluvial lands. We were compelled to drive before us all the relay horses and other beasts of burden to open a passage and save our bare feet from being dreadfully lacerated by the *gamelote*, a tall, cutting, and worthless grass, with blades almost as sharp as a "Toledo." It grows so closely and rapidly as to obliterate in a few days the paths made by travellers, killing every other species in its way. Unfortunately, it is perfectly useless as fodder, except for *Chigüires* or water-hogs, which feed on it when nothing better offers, and to the flesh of which it imparts its disagreeable flavor; the *gamelote* is therefore consigned to the flames as soon as it is ripe enough to burn, which it does with as much seeming fury as

it displayed against the feet and legs of travellers in its green days.

On the second night of our journey, we pitched our camp near several ponds, literally crowded with alligators and fish and water fowl of all varieties, which kept up a continual strife, to our great discomfort. Not only was the water rendered noxious by the numerous creatures in it, but even the air was filled with the effluvium and mosquitoes arising therefrom. We were compelled to dig wells in the vicinity of the lagoons to obtain water for our use; but no artifice could shield us from the unmerciful attacks of the mosquitoes, especially the kind called *pullones*, from the length and strength of the proboscis. We tried in vain to escape their painful sting by rolling ourselves from head to foot in our ponchos and hammocks, at the peril of suffocation; the needle-like proboscis of the insects actually penetrated through the folds of our covering so as to draw blood. Nor would the smoke of the blazing fires around the camp drive them off, as was anticipated. Fortunately, they only paid us an early visit, retiring all at once before midnight, and leaving us to the tender mercies of their kinsfolk, the noisy mosquitoes or *zancudos*. These, although not so tormenting with their sting, were none the less so with their music, while no part of our bodies could be left uncovered without being instantly besieged by swarms of these "howling-insect wolves." This, however, was the only occasion upon which we were troubled by mosquitoes during our journey, as they only appear in force during the rainy season.

I noticed here for the first time a low range of hills or *médanos*, mere accumulations of sand tossed from place to place by the winds across the boundless plain; to-day, they rise above the surrounding prairies; to-morrow, they are levelled with the dust of the savannas: fit emblem of the ephemeral republics of the South! These *médanos* had been overrun by the *gamelote*, giving them the character of permanent hills, from which the place takes the name of Medanos de San Martin.

It is scarcely necessary to say that there was no temptation to prolong our stay there longer than was needed by our horses, who revelled all night in the fine meadows around the lagoons. Packing up once more, we bade adieu to that inhospitable encampment long before daylight.

Struggling through miles of *gamelote*, we reached the cattle farm of Corozito towards noon. Don Luciano Samuel, the proprietor, extended to us the hospitalities of his demesne with the characteristic grace and frankness of the people in those regions. From thence to the Pass of Apurito, on the river Apure, was only a few hours' ride; and the morning being the best time for crossing the river with our animals, we rose early in order to reach it before the breeze should commence blowing.

Owing to the thick vegetation on its banks, we did not discover the river until we were close upon it; and then, with what delight did I again view the broad surface of this magnificent stream!

Although born near its shores, I had but a faint recollection of its broad expanse. Perhaps its turbu-

lent waves had rocked my raw-hide cradle during one of the periodical inundations; for, from earliest childhood, I have borne marks left by the teeth of the *caribe*.

What glorious recollections of the fierce contest for liberty did its waters bring to memory! Not the lordly Thames, with its "woven-winged" argosies, teeming with the merchandise of the earth; the enchanting Delaware, framed in romantic cottages and orchard groves; nor yet the splendid Hudson, renowned for its floating palaces and legends, but more, that on its banks nestles the home of Irving, awakened in my breast such emotions of heartfelt admiration as did this silent messenger from the Sierra Nevada! There, amidst the thunders of the Heavens and rolling avalanches, it takes its rise, precipitately descending to the plain below through a succession of frightful leaps, which shake the primeval forest to its very foundations. And so it comes, that its surface is often loaded with an immense accumulation of fallen trees from the various zones of vegetation it traverses in its course. Thus the delicate ferns and other Alpine plants are commingled with those of the burning climes below, and finally deposited in the wide estuary forming the delta of the Orinoco. When future generations shall disentomb them in a petrified state, their geologists will no doubt attribute this singular agglomeration to wonderful changes in the temperature of the earth.

The river Apure, properly speaking, is formed by the confluence of two other streams, the Sarare and Uribante. The former has its rise among the New

Granadian range of mountains, although a great portion of its waters flow now into the Arauca, consequent on the great deposits of sand and drift wood accumulating at its mouth.

The Uribante, or Upper Apure, may be considered the main channel of this river, with a total length of six hundred and forty miles, five hundred and sixty-four of which are navigable for large vessels. It takes the name of Apure after its junction with the Sarare; but is again subdivided into several ramifications called *caños* or creeks, each of which has a particular name; among them, La Ebilla, Apurito and Apure-Seco are the most important; these again unite with the main channel, and form islands of surprising fertility. These islands are invaluable as *potreros* for the cattle, when other parts of the country are parched with the droughts of summer, the steep banks and wide channels of the rivers serving as the most effectual barriers against their roaming propensities.

The geographical situation of this river, joined as it is to one of the greatest tributaries of the wide ocean—the Orinoco—at a point nearly five hundred miles from its confluence with the sea, stamps it as one of the most important lines of internal navigation in the world, and points to the wild region of the Llanos as a future emporium of civilization. To it all the products and other natural sources of wealth from the adjoining provinces will be brought for immediate exportation to foreign markets; as, in addition to the vast area of level country traversed by it, this river receives the tribute of a hundred navigable streams

descending from the eastern slope of the Andes of New Granada and Venezuela.

The width of the Apure varies considerably according to the seasons of rains and droughts; sometimes extending miles beyond its actual channel, but usually not less than one thousand yards broad. Humboldt, who measured it at San Fernando in the month of May, when it had receded to its lowest ebb, found it to be two hundred and thirty-six toises broad; higher up it is considerably wider, gradually diminishing as it approaches its great confluent. Alluding to this singular phenomenon, mostly caused by evaporation and infiltrations through the dry, sandy banks of the river, the same eminent traveller elucidates some curious facts worthy of notice. He says: "Some idea of the magnitude of these effects may be formed, from the fact that we found the heat of the dry sands at different hours of the day from 36° to 52°,* and that of sands covered with three or four inches of water 32°. The beds of rivers are heated as far as the depth to which the solar rays can penetrate, without undergoing too great an expansion in their passage through the superincumbent strata of water. Besides, filtration extends in a lateral direction far beyond the bed of the river. The shore, which appears dry to us, imbibes water as far up as to the level of the surface of the river. We saw water gush out at the distance of fifty toises from the shore, every time that the Indians struck their oars into the ground. Now, these sands, wet below but

* Centigrade Thermom.=97° to 126° Fah.

dry above, and exposed to the solar rays, act like sponges, and lose the infiltrated water every instant by evaporation. The vapor that is emitted traverses the upper stratum of sand strongly heated, and becomes sensible to the eye when the air cools towards evening. As the beach dries, it draws from the river new portions of water; and it may be easily conceived that this continual alternation of vaporization and lateral absorption must cause an immense loss, difficult to submit to exact calculation. The increase of these losses would be in proportion to the length of the course of the rivers, if from their source to their mouth they were equally surrounded by a flat shore; but these shores being formed by deposits from the water, and the water having less velocity in proportion as it is more remote from its source, throwing down more sediment in the lower than in the upper part of its course, many rivers in hot climates undergo a diminution in the quantity of their water as they approach their outlets. Mr. Barrow observed these curious effects of sands in the southern part of Africa, on the banks of the Orange river. They have also become the subject of a very important discussion in the various hypotheses that have been formed respecting the course of the Niger."

At the time we crossed the Apure, it was considerably below the average width, as we were then in the midst of the dry season; nevertheless, it presented a formidable obstacle to our progress. There being only one canoe at the pass, the whole morning was spent in the transportation of our bulky riding-gear and luggage; and the breeze setting in shortly after

our arrival, the passage of the horses was postponed until noon, in consequence of the agitated state of the water. It would have been rather hazardous to expose our valuable steeds to the "chopping sea," which, beating against the animals' nostrils, is apt to stop their respiration, and as they then lose their steadiness in swimming, are rendered liable to be drowned.

We were met on the opposite bank of the river by a committee of gentlemen in their shirt sleeves, like ourselves, commissioned by the inhabitants of Apurito to tender our Leader the hospitalities of their village. Prominent among them was the general overseer of his estate, Commandant Rávago, a tough, wiry, and weather-beaten individual, whose nose Nature had made of an unjustifiable length, and who discoursed in a language peculiar to himself. Indeed, it required one to be well versed in the jargon of the Llanos to understand his dissertations upon matters and things in general; for he pretended to be a connoisseur in every thing, except languages; the English, especially, was peculiarly distasteful to his ears, and whenever he heard us conversing in that tongue, he declared in his patois, that it reminded him of a pack of horses neighing to each other. Notwithstanding his uncouth manner and appearance, our overseer was a very shrewd fellow, and quite *au fait* in all matters appertaining to cattle farms.

As for the village or port of Apurito, it was a mere assemblage of mud-plastered cottages, thatched, like all houses in that region, with palm leaves. Some of them had doors and windows of planed

boards; but the greater part were free to whoever and whatever chose to walk or *crawl* into them; no church, no school-house, no building devoted to public meetings of any sort. The Alcalde, that most important functionary in small Spanish communities, held his audiences in the narrow corridor of his hut, while the *sala* was devoted to the all-absorbing game of *monte*. Once a year the Padre, next in importance to his Honor the Alcalde, paid a visit to the village, when all the boys and girls who had not been baptized were brought before him at his lodgings, where the ceremony was performed in a somewhat informal manner, and without special regard being paid to the strict injunctions of the Church. There were a few storehouses scattered along the banks of the river, where all business transactions were carried on. These were principally in hides, which are given in exchange for the few articles of barter brought from the Orinoco. Hides, in fact, are the bank notes of the Llanos; and although rather voluminous and uncleanly, they change hands as readily as any "paper" that was ever in "the market." These are taken to Ciudad Bolivar, formerly Angostura, in bongos and one-mast sailing vessels called *lanchas*, which return laden with salt, knives, blankets, and printed calicoes, articles of prime necessity among the inhabitants. Other ports along the Apure, such as Nutrias and San Fernando, carry on a very extensive trade in these goods. The first-named town adds largely to her exports, bringing in the agricultural products of the adjoining province of Barinas. These are coffee, cacao, indigo, and tobacco; the last being

highly prized in Germany for meerschaums, and always obtaining a ready sale at Bolivar.

The course of the Apure being nearly in a straight line from west to east, the trade winds blowing across the plains in the summer season play a very important part in propelling, even against the current, the heaviest craft sailing up the river. During the rainy season, the westerly winds combine with the current of the stream in expediting the progress of vessels. Of late, several steamboats have been added to those already engaged in this traffic; and I am told are doing a very profitable business. God speed them!

"During the time of great floods," writes Humboldt, "the inhabitants of these countries, to avoid the force of the currents, and the danger arising from the trunks of trees which these currents bring down, instead of ascending the beds of rivers in their boats, cross the savannas. To go from San Fernando to the villages of San Juan de Payara, San Rafael de Atamaica, or San Francisco de Capanaparo, they direct their course due south, as if they were crossing a single river of twenty leagues broad. The junctions of the Guarico, the Apure, the Cabullare, and the Arauca with the Orinoco, form, at a hundred and sixty leagues from the coast of Guiana, a kind of interior delta, of which hydrography furnishes few examples in the Old World. According to the height of the mercury in the barometer, the waters of the Apure have only a fall of thirty-four toises from San Fernando to the sea. The fall from the mouths of

the Osage and the Missouri to the bar of the Mississippi is not more considerable. The savannas of Lower Louisiana everywhere remind us of the savannas of the Lower Orinoco."—*Travels to the Equinoxial Regions.*

CHAPTER X.

SAVANNAS OF APURE.

After a thorough examination of animals and baggage, to see that all was as it ought to be, we left the uninteresting village of Apurito for our cattle-estate of San Pablo de Apure, a few miles further south. As we passed the last house fronting the river, Mr. Thomas descried a jaguar-skin, which the owner of the hut had spread to dry upon the fence. Wishing to examine it more closely, he spurred his mule ahead and was in the act of seizing the skin, when the animal, whose view of it had until then been obstructed by the other beasts, coming unexpectedly into close proximity with the—to him—fearful object, drew back in terror, snorting, kicking, and plunging so violently as to capsize the unlucky artist upon the sandy beach. The abhorrence with which mules regard the South American tiger, is one of the most curious phenomena of animal instinct with which I am acquainted; not only do they manifest it at sight

of the creature, but also by their scent, while the animal is still a long distance off, and yet, in most cases, they have never seen a tiger, as was the case in the present instance, this mule having been reared in the *potreros* of San Pablo de Paya, where tigers are rarely, if ever, met with.

After a ride of a few hours through alternate glades of gigantic mimosas and verdant savannas, we reached San Pablo before night had cast her gloom over those solemn wilds. The house was neat and well located, commanding an extended view of the country and innumerable herds of cattle grazing in the distance. There were, besides, a large *caney* or barracoon for the accommodation of the men and their chattels, and a detached hut in which the culinary functions of the establishment were to be performed.

The appellation of San Pablo, conferred on this farm also—although the owner possessed already another of the same name—made me suspect that snakes were not uncommon in that country, the reality of which fact I ascertained the first time that I strolled any considerable distance from the house. In a country where saints are supposed to exert an unbounded influence over all human affairs, it is not unusual to give to houses and localities, threatened with some special calamity, the name of the saint who is considered the patron or defender from that particular evil: thus places which are frequently visited by thunderstorms, are called after Santa Barbara; those infested with snakes, receive the name of San Pablo, &c., &c.

Although this farm formed part of the demesne we came to inspect, we did not remain there longer than

was absolutely necessary to investigate into its general condition.

When the order was given to remove to El Frio—another farm further westward—we gladly saddled horses and started off at a brisk pace over those fresh and beautiful prairies which, with their perpetual grassy carpet, caused us to feel as if we were coming into a land of promise and contentment, instead of one of toil and hardship. Indeed, every thing denoted that we were now entering on far different scenes from those we had left across the river. It seemed a terrestrial paradise, where a beneficent Providence had congregated every animal most needed by man. Now it was the slender forms of deer in herds bounding swiftly over the greensward; now the gristly wild hogs and capyvaras making hastily for the nearest swamp to avoid the eager chase of our men. Occasionally might be seen a redoubtable wild bull, retiring sulkily and slowly at the head of his shaggy troop, as if wishing to dispute our right to enter his domain. Vegetation, however, seemed to flourish here less than in other places we had visited, as, excepting a few scattered palms of a new variety, and some straggling Matas—which, from the mirage continually before us, appeared like fairy groves set in clearest water—nothing but the fine and level lawn met the eye for many miles.

Unlike the higher plains, where only a coarse herbage predominates, the savannas of Apure are characterized by a luxuriant growth of various grasses, which, like those of the Portuguesa, preserve a uniform verdure throughout the year. These grasses—

some of which are as soft and pliable as silk—are most important in the economy of cattle-breeding in the savannas watered by the Apure and its tributaries. The prodigious increase of animals in these plains is mainly owing to the superiority of the pastures over those of the upper regions of the Llanos, from whence the farmer is compelled to migrate with his stock every summer.

I noticed in Apure three varieties of grass, which in richness of flavor and nutritious qualities can hardly be surpassed by any other fodder plants of the temperate zones. In the early part of the rainy season, the granadilla—a grass reaching to about four feet in height, with tender succulent blades and panicles of seed not unlike some varieties of broomcorn—starts with the earliest showers of spring. It grows with great rapidity, and is greedily sought by all ruminants; but being an annual, soon disappears, leaving no vestige of its existence. In the alluvial bottom-lands subject to the periodical inundation, two other grasses, no less esteemed for their nutriment, have an uninterrupted growth and luxuriance which the hottest season cannot blast; these are the *carretera*, named from the beautiful prairie-goose that feeds on it, and the *lambedora*, so termed on account of its softness, animals feeding on it appearing to lick rather than masticate it. Cattle and horses thrive on it very perceptibly, and even calves only a fortnight old, may be left to shift for themselves amidst those nutritious pastures.

Esteros is the name by which these perennial meadows are there designated. They have moreover the

GARZERO

advantage of retaining water enough throughout the year to make them the resort of all kinds of quadrupeds and of every fowl whom "Nature has taught to dip the wing in water," the former to allay their thirst and feast on the fine grass, and the latter for the purpose of raising their young in the vicinity of ponds well stocked with fish of all varieties.

No description can convey a just idea of the appearance presented by these lagoons, crowded with almost every variety of animal. The birds in particular—most of which belong to the extensive family of cranes—seem to have migrated there from all quarters of the globe. These fluttering communities of aquatic birds are known in the country under the appropriate name of *garzeros*, from the many *garzas*—herons—predominating in them. The immense number of these may be conceived from the fact that their colonies sometimes embrace several miles in extent. I noticed there also various kinds of cranes—*garzones*—one of them, called the soldier, from its erect bearing and martial air—is over five feet in height, with a bill fully a foot long. The *garzas* were of various sizes and colors, some snow-white, some a delicate blue, others gray or pink, and many of a brilliant scarlet. Although cranes and herons are species very nearly allied, yet they verify the old saying, "birds of a feather flock together," for each keeps quite distinct from the other. They generally select the spreading top of a low tree—*caujaro*—growing in vast quantities near the water, in which to build their nests; these are of dry sticks very ingeniously interwoven among the branches. Well-beaten tracks are

made under the bushes by the tramp of many suspicious characters of the feline tribe, who make these feathered colonies their favorite resort, where they improve every opportunity of appropriating any young birds that may chance to fall from the nests.

As we rode past several ponds, covered with a kind of water-lily, whose flowers are of a dark purple color, myriads of ducks, of the small species called *güiriries*, rose in the air, actually for the moment obscuring the sun. They uttered a shrill note, clearly repeating the sound from which they are named, so that the hunter easily discovers their whereabout. There were, besides, great numbers of a larger species of duck—the *pato real*, or royal duck—so named, I presume, from a graceful tuft of black feathers with which it is crowned. Here and there a brace of *carreteros* soared over head, uttering their peculiar rolling notes; the hoarse quacking of the male bird, followed by the shrill cries of the female, make perfect the before-mentioned resemblance to the rumbling of cartwheels.

During the moulting season, the people in the neighborhood of these lagoons resort to them from time to time, and drive without difficulty towards the farm-house as many of these ducks as they may desire. I was assured by several reliable individuals that not far from San Pablo there is a lagoon on the borders of which a regiment of cavalry once encamped, and lived during a fortnight exclusively on these birds, without any apparent diminution of their numbers.

This prodigious exuberance of animal life has justly entitled the Apure to the reputation of being

a land of plenty; but, alas, it is also a land of death! as, from the bottom of these extensive marshes miasmas of a pestilential nature are continually arising, which, at certain seasons of the year, render this fine country almost uninhabitable for man. They are also the abode of those enormous water-snakes or anacondas, known in the country under the name of *culebras de agua*, in contradistinction to the boa constrictor or *traga-venado*, so termed on account of the ease with which it gorges itself with a whole deer at once. Both of these snakes are also remarkable for the strength which enables them to crush their victims in the coils of their huge muscular bodies; but the anaconda is by far the more voracious and bold of the two, attacking not only inferior animals, such as deer, capyvaras, and young calves, but even that pride of the herd, the *padrote*, cannot always escape the deadly embrace. Woe to the unsuspecting colt or heifer, who, panting with thirst and heat, should incautiously plunge into one of these modern Stygian lakes, for the coil of the monster will in an instant be around it, followed by a fearful cracking of its bones. This accomplished, the snake proceeds to cover the whole mangled body with a slimy secretion from his mouth which assists him in the process of deglutition. Should it be a stag—the head of which presents the formidable obstacle of its huge antlers—the snake commences by swallowing first the hind quarters, trusting to time and the natural process of decay for the head to drop off. In this plight the anaconda is often found, looking like an immense log, stretched out in the soft mud of lagoons, whence they are then easily

dragged by means of a lazo, tied to the tail of a horse. On examining the mouth of one of these snakes, it will be found that the jaws are furnished with a row of sharp and crooked teeth, bent inward like tenter hooks; with these he seizes his prey, and holds it securely until the victim, unable to struggle longer, drops exhausted. What appears most extraordinary in these unequal contests, is the tenacity with which the snake adheres to the soft mud of the lagoon, there being neither rock nor stump to which he can secure himself. Nor will the efforts of a large bull, no matter how powerful, be sufficient to drag the snake one inch out of his element, unless he is first cut asunder. In darting upon a quadruped, the anaconda invariably aims at its snout, the animal seldom escaping when once the terrible fangs have been buried in its flesh. It is not an unusual thing, however, for a bull to cut a snake asunder in his violent struggles; then the shaggy victor may be seen proudly marching at the head of his troop with this unsightly trophy hanging from his nose. The toughness of the anaconda's skin makes it eagerly sought after by the inhabitants for straps and various other objects susceptible of injury from friction, as they outwear those made from any other material. The fat is also much esteemed for burning, and as a lubricator for the bones and tendons of persons afflicted with rheumatism, or rigidity of limb. This oil is perfectly clear and transparent, without any disagreeable odor, and is readily absorbed into the system by simply rubbing it on the skin.

Shortly after leaving San Pablo, we had a spirited

chase after a herd of wild pigs. There were upwards of twenty browsing on the borders of a pond, and in an instant the whole plain—in such repose a few moments before—resounded with the cries and clatter of our horsemen in eager pursuit of this delicious game of the Llanos. Many of the men being provided with lances, they had no difficulty in despatching most of those whose fate threw them in the way of the remorseless cavaliers. But an old *berraco* or boar, which seemed to be the sultan of the grisly community, harassed by the combined attacks of several horsemen, suddenly whirled round and made a gallant stand, determined, as it appeared, not to give up without a fierce resistance. At first it was supposed that three or four men would be sufficient to bring him down, and that number were accordingly sent after him; but finding the engagement protracted, several others, including myself, went to their assistance. On reaching the spot a fearful spectacle was presented to us. The infuriated animal, his eyes shooting fire, and fiercely grinding his tusks, stood at bay a short distance from his aggressors, his mouth covered with a bloody froth, while one of the men lay bleeding profusely from a wound on the thigh inflicted by the sharp tusks of the boar. We learned that Cipriano, the wounded hunter's name, perceiving that the lances of his companions only succeeded in irritating the boar, very foolishly leaped from his saddle, and drawing his sword, deliberately attacked him without even taking the precaution of covering his movements with the sheepskin from his saddle, as is practised in contests with wild bulls. The man

boasted with reason of being the most skilful matador in all the Apure; but in this case he did not reckon on the tough hide of his opponent; for, at the first rush of the boar upon him, and in spite of the steadiness with which he aimed the stroke, the well-tempered steel bent like a reed the moment it encountered the shoulder of the boar, leaving Cipriano completely at the mercy of the enraged brute. The consequence, as I have already stated, was a severe gash, almost laying bare the femoral bone of the unfortunate matador. The tusks of the wild boar, especially those of the lower jaw, are so long and sharp, that the animal makes use of them as a bull does of his horns. The upper ones rest directly upon the lower, and his constant grinding of them, especially when he is enraged, soon wears the points into a broad and sharp edge. United, these tusks form a perfect circle five or six inches in diameter. The services of our surgeon, Dr. Gallegos, were immediately called into requisition, who dressed the wound, while the companions of the suffering hunter endeavored to avenge him. They rained a shower of lances upon the body of the enraged beast, but, apparently, with no better effect; for, with one powerful stroke of his tusks, he broke in two the shaft of some and carried away the head of others. Doubtless we should have succeeded in finishing him after a time; but the helpless condition of our companion requiring especial care, we placed him on his saddle, for want of better conveyance, and, leaving the boar conqueror, proceeded on our journey.

Having killed more animals than we could conveniently carry, we selected two fat sows for our

breakfast, and left the remainder to the flock of turkey-buzzards which, like a troop of hungry scavengers, followed our line of march across the prairies.

I may observe here that the wild boar of the Llanos is the common hog run wild in consequence of the little or no care bestowed upon their breeding in the cattle-farms, and as they find in these swamps all the elements they require for their development, viz., roots of various kinds, sweet herbs, eels, snakes, and mire *ad libitum*, their propagation is greatly increased. Thus the number of pigs in these savannas is almost incredible—in the lands of El Frio alone being estimated at forty thousand—and a just idea may be formed of their ravages from the fact that, for miles around, those fine prairies have been completely ploughed up by them, rendering the ground exceedingly dangerous for horses, and almost useless for cattle-breeding, by destroying the fine pastures which are invariably replaced by a crop of worthless weeds.

Wild hogs, nevertheless, sometimes render good service by destroying the snakes—for which they seem to have a particular penchant—especially that little scourge of the savannas of Apure, the dreaded *mata-caballo*.

The tails of these hogs being especially long, and, as usual, twisted, they swing them round continually when running—a peculiarity which did not escape a benighted son of Africa, who was being trained at a cattle-farm to the business of the Llanos, and which occasioned quite a ludicrous scene at one of these hunts. He had become already expert in the use of the lazo, and was one day taken to the savanna

by the overseer for the purpose of procuring an ox for slaughter, when they fell in with a fine hog, which at once changed their plans, and they immediately gave him chase. None of the men had lazos, except the negro, and he was therefore commanded to follow and secure the game; but although he rode a very swift horse, and was often within range of the lazo, he was observed each time to slacken his pace without any apparent cause. "Now then, ... son of . . . . . thy mother," the Llanero vociferated, "let go the lazo, or we will roast thee alive in his stead," shouting at him also many other no less characteristic expressions. But Sambo, waving the lazo over his head in order to keep the noose open, would again stop short of his mark, until the pig, who probably knew by this time that he was wanted, straining every nerve to reach a swamp hard by, succeeded at last in gaining a clump of wild plantains that bordered the *estero*. Here the major-domo, losing his small remnant of patience, quickly rode up to him, and discharging sundry lashes with his *chaparro* upon the sooty skin of his apprentice, asked him, in a thundering voice: "How now, *my master*, why did ye let the fellow go without a single effort on thy part to secure him? Have not I taught thee well enough how to handle a lazo, thou sooty imp?" "Oh! yessa, massa," quoth the darkey; "but, look yer, massa, when me wisher to lazo pig, him wisher to lazo me neither;" imitating, at the same time, with his arm the swinging of the pig's tail.

Very beautiful was the appearance of the many herds, each headed by its *padrote*, on all sides dispers-

ing at our approach. The bulls are generally of a grave and quiet disposition when collected in herds, and rather avoid the approach of man unless provoked to self-defence, when they become very ferocious. Each troop is under the control of the most powerful bull in the drove, a position which is only attained by dint of strength and courage; as not only has he to defend his troop from the attacks of the common enemy, but to maintain his supremacy against rival enamorados. Thus the *padrote*, or big father, as he is appropriately styled, can show many scars upon his tough hide, received in these fierce combats. If a lion or jaguar approach during the night, the *padrote* immediately takes all his measures for the defence of his post. His first care is to compel the herd into a compact mass, and then advances to engage the enemy in single combat, from which he rarely fails to come off victorious. In the mean time the herd, within the limited space into which they have been congregated, with heads lowered towards the enemy, prepare to repulse the intruder and defend their young by a formidable array of horns.

Man is the only antagonist whose superiority the *padrote* will acknowledge; but even this is not without an obstinate resistance whenever he has an opportunity. Nor will he retire in a hurry from his pursuers, but facing about from time to time, often succeeds in thwarting their intentions and securing an honorable retreat.

When the sun is high in the meridian, troops of these noble animals may be seen slowly advancing towards the nearest *mata*, seeking to avoid the exces-

sive heat of the day and to enjoy their siesta in cool retirement. Here they amuse themselves sometimes in watching over their harems, sometimes in making their toilet, which is rubbing the point of their horns against the hard trunk of a palm tree, or any other convenient object, until they become sharp as awls. Woe! then, to the imprudent traveller who, overpowered by the heat, seeks refuge in one of those groves, thus intruding upon the sanctuary of his bullship's seraglio. Should he succeed in escaping safe and sound, his horse is certain of being severely chastised for his master's indiscretion.

An adventurous Briton, who once penetrated into one of those haunts sacred to Taurus, came very near losing his life in consequence. He fortunately escaped with only a few scratches and contusions; but his clothes were torn from his body by the horns and hoofs of the bull. It chanced in this wise: The intensity of the sun's rays had compelled the traveller and his companion—a shrewd old Llanero, who acted as guide—to seek shelter under a solitary grove. On a closer acquaintance they judged it to be the retreat of a wild bull, from the deep scars observable on the bark of the trees, evidently caused by some animal's horns. They were not mistaken, for they soon discovered at a short distance, quietly grazing, the probable owner of the rural retreat. Knowing from experience that this would be a very unsafe spot for their siesta, the Llanero advised that they should move off at once, rather than be ejected thence, as would surely be the case if they remained much longer. But John Bull, with characteristic pride, and trusting entirely

to his fine brace of pistols, laughed at the idea of giving up his comfortable quarters, without at least a struggle for their possession. Ordering the man to sling his hammock, he carefully examined his pistols, after which he retired to his aërial couch. The Llanero shook his head and very wisely omitted unsaddling the horses, contenting himself with merely unfastening the straps. Presently the bull began to advance in the direction of the *mata*, which the phlegmatic Englishman no sooner perceived, than quitting his hammock, he seized his pistols and went to the encounter. The Llanero crossed himself, and taking the horses aside, proceeded to secure the saddles and to tie the lazo to the tail of his own steed. In the mean time the bull continued leisurely advancing, apparently without much noticing his uninvited guests; occasionally, however, uttering deep bellowings expressive of his displeasure. Bang! bang! went the two pistols; but before the smoke had cleared, the Llanero beheld his companion stretched upon the ground and fiercely trampled under the feet of the infuriated animal. Swift as thought, the Llanero sprang into the saddle, and spreading his lazo, whirled it two or three times above his head; then let it fall around the horns of the bull at the very instant he was about to transfix the prostrate traveller. Thus providentially prevented from doing further injury, he was easily hamstrung and finally despatched by the captors. That the Englishman escaped being instantly killed, can only be accounted for by the fact that a bull often misses his aim from the very fury of his attack.

CHAPTER XI.

EL FRIO.

On arriving at El Frio, we were agreeably surprised at finding more spacious accommodations than we had anticipated. The house, although thatched like all the rest with palm leaves, was spacious and well built of *pajareque;* that is, the framework of the walls was of strong posts of timber, well lathed and plastered over with soft mud mixed with straw. In addition to a large *sala* or reception room, it contained three or four sleeping apartments; but these last were so full of bats, that it was impossible to pass a comfortable night in them, especially on account of the disagreeable odor proceeding from these disgusting creatures, while the incessant bird-like chirping sound which they made overhead, completely murdered our first night's sleep. We tried in vain to smoke them out by means of dried cow dung. They absented themselves during a portion of the day, but were sure to return at dusk, bringing with them an abundant supply of wild berries for their supper, some of which they were constantly dropping in our

hammocks, finally compelling us to seek refuge in the open air of the corridors and courtyard.

Apart from the mansion stood a row of smaller structures containing the kitchen and storerooms of the farm, which being useless to us, we abandoned to the bats and turkey-buzzards. Our cooking, as usual, was left to our skilful *chef* Mónico and his satellites, who preferred the *sans façon* style of the camp to confining themselves in the narrow range of a kitchen.

That which chiefly attracted my attention at this farm was the substantial nature of the fence encompassing the buildings, capable of resisting not only the sudden rush of a herd of cattle, for which purpose it was intended, but also a heavy cannonade, in case of need. It was constructed of enormous blocks of trees, almost impervious to steel or fire, driven into the ground, each as close to the other as possible, and neatly trimmed at top so as to present an even surface. I was unable to comprehend by what means those monster rails could have been removed from the forest. This, I afterwards ascertained, had been accomplished during the inundation of the savannas, when they are easily transported in *balsas* or rafts made of lighter wood. The trees yielding this everlasting timber are two distinct species of acacias, known in the country under the euphonious names of *Angelino* and *Acapro*, either of which will turn the edge of the best tempered steel if great care is not used. I was shown here two uprights to the principal gate of the *majada* or great enclosure for cattle, nearly a hundred years old, still in perfect preserva-

tion, although standing in soil subject to alternate inundations and parching heats.

The *majada*, also formed of strong posts, was sufficiently spacious to contain three thousand animals, with compartments for the accommodation of the herds during the various operations of cattle farms. Although there was abundant vegetable material for the comfort or security of the inmates, I observed here, as everywhere, a total want of shade trees around the houses. The Llaneros, although strongly addicted to the "sweets of savage life," are decidedly opposed to trees in the immediate neighborhood of their dwellings. Trees, say they, attract the thunderbolt of heaven and the wild beasts of the field, being besides the natural refuge of snakes and mosquitoes during the great floods. This lack of shade was the more regretted by us as we were then in the midst of the summer solstice, when the sun pours its vertical rays upon the dry soil, while each day between the hours of ten and eleven, a strong breeze arose, sweeping over the exposed plain, and bringing with it showers of sand; this lodged in our mouths, eyes and ears, and mingled with the food, thus rendering it unpalatable even to our carnivorous appetites. And yet, but a short distance from the house bloomed an inviting grove, two or three miles in circumference; this a man of taste could have readily converted into a delightful abode, especially as in the rainy season the inundation of the surrounding savannas would permit the approach of vessels from the Orinoco, by which the owner could supply himself with all the comforts of civilized life. This charming spot was

further embellished by a small lake, where we daily watered our horses, though not without some risk to life and limb on account of the *babas* and caimans swarming in its depths. Even the shallower portions were so filled with sting-rays, caribes, and other aquatic vermin, as to render bathing in it extremely hazardous. Our ablutions, therefore, were limited to the occasional scrubbing of our dusty and heated bodies with wet towels. The *babas*, although still more repulsive in appearance than their relative of the long snout—the crocodile—are considered a *bonne bouche*, especially the tail, the flesh of which is said to rival chicken in its flavor. From this uninviting fount of the desert, necessity compelled us to replenish our gourds each afternoon, that the particles of sand and clay with which it was filled might have time to settle during the night.

The summer breezes, although disagreeable in many respects, are yet most necessary, carrying off noxious exhalations arising from the marshy deposits which remain in those low grounds long after the waters have subsided; otherwise those regions would be uninhabitable. The Apure is especially salubrious in the dry season, and were it not for their imprudences, the inhabitants would enjoy perfect health during at least seven months of the year. But these people, careless of consequences, and trusting to their iron constitutions, are not deterred, while in the excitement of a long chase, from plunging into one of these pestiferous marshes after the object of their pursuit. The result is a severe reaction of the system, followed by violent spasms, fevers, or that most horrid

of diseases, elephantiasis or *mal de San Lazaro*, so prevalent in the hot regions of tropical America. Add to this recklessness the great want of medical resources in the country, and the consequent wretchedness and misery can be readily imagined. Nevertheless, the inhabitants seem to care so little about these endemic vicissitudes, that in time one accustoms himself also to view them in the same spirit of fatalism which they attach to every event of their lives.

I was never weary of admiring the beauty of the sky and transparency of the atmosphere at this season. Objects three or four miles distant appeared as if actually only a few rods from the beholder, a circumstance which often misled me when in my rambles after game I had to traverse the plain on foot, occasioning frequent disappointments in my reckonings.

The radiation of heat evolved from the earth at night, produced by the perfect clearness of the sky, was so great at times as to produce a very sensible degree of cold, which rendered the use of blankets quite acceptable; hence the name of *El Frio* given to this estate. The evenings, especially, were so raw and chilly, that in order to keep warm, we passed a great portion of the night in revelry and dancing by moonlight, although not one crinoline graced our soirées. But we had excellent dancers of the *Zapateo*, a sort of "breakdown," in which most of our men exhibited a flexibility of feet and ankles which would have done credit to the most accomplished Ethiopian troop.

Our host *ño* Juan Manuel, as the overseer was familiarly styled, had engaged the services of a cele-

brated player on the *bandola* from Banco Largo, and there being no lack of *improvisatori* among us, these nightly revels were conducted with all the *éclat* that circumstances would permit. Among the bards who distinguished themselves most at such times were the *Negro* Quintana, an old Sergeant of the Guard, whose constant attendance for many years on his beloved Chief and "Master," as he styled the General, had endeared him to the latter; and Sarmiento, as the other was named, who acted in the capacity of *capo-ral* to the cattle farm of San Pablo. Both of these made themselves famous by the wonderful facility with which they improvised on any given subject. They occasionally varied the performances by singing to their guitars ballads whose burden was invariably some adventure arising from the eventful life in the pampas. Of these choice morceaux the most popular were "Mambrun," an imitation of the old French song, "*Malbrook s'en fut en guerre*," and "Marcelino." The hero of this last was a renowned bandit, who for a long time baffled all efforts to capture him, but who finally received his deserts from the hands of a traitor, who joined his forays for the purpose of betraying him to his enemies.

Marcelino was a common *peon* in one of the cattle farms bordering the river Matiyure, but being of a restless and daring disposition, preferred the roving life of a bandit to the more sober occupations of the farm. Finding himself pursued by the hand of justice, he was compelled for a time to seek refuge among the Indians south of the great river Meta, who are at this day sole tenants of those immeasurable

wilds. His superior acquirements and boldness soon gained him the confidence and respect of the savages, who finally adopted him for their leader, following him in his marauding expeditions against the defenceless cattle farms this side of the Arauca. Emboldened by success, they attacked the wealthy town of that name, whence Marcelino carried off a beautiful woman, the wife of a respectable farmer of the place, who employed every means in his power to recover her. All efforts, however, were for a time fruitless, owing to the wild nature of the country and the cunning of her captor; but he was finally taken in one of his expeditions. The intention had been to send him to Achaguas, with which object he was well bound and placed under a strong escort; but being a great favorite with all classes of Llaneros, who admire valor in every form, he was finally given in charge of the famous Manuel Blanco—a rich land owner of the Apure—at the earnest solicitation of the latter, who promised to see him safely delivered to the authorities. On the way thither, however, Marcelino managed to give his bondsman the slip, and escaped to his favorite haunts again. All further attempts to retake him failing at that time, a bold sambo from the upper country volunteered to penetrate into the unknown region, intending to decoy him and his savage band to a certain cattle farm where a strong picket of cavalry would lie in wait. Having represented to Marcelino that immense wealth in money and jewels was possessed by the owners of the farm, the bandit concluded to come out of his fastness and retrieve his former fame by a bold

dash at the cattle farm of Herradero. On arriving at the place, where matters having been arranged as had been agreed upon between Maldonado—the betrayer's appropriate name—and the officers of justice, Marcelino and his band were surprised. He endeavored to escape, but Maldonado spurring his horse toward the unsuspecting bandit, pierced him with his sword. Without delaying he then pushed on, followed by the *hateros*, to the camp where the unfortunate lady was still a captive. They found her surrounded by a train of red skin dames of honor, all of whom were afterward distributed as servants among the families of their conquerors.

Nearly all the Indians of that tribe were destroyed on this occasion, only a few escaping to the Big Forest, where they bewailed among the monkeys and jaguars of those solitudes the loss of their favorite chieftain. The ballad which commemorates the event, commences:

"A Marcelino lo mataron
En el hato de Herradero,
Y los Indios lo lloraron
A su capitan vaquero."

Marcelino the bold was slain,
Slain at the farm of Herradero;
And the Indians lament in vain
Their loved sportsman, chieftain and hero.

Maldonado, who at heart was a rogue of the same stamp as Marcelino, having tasted of the independent roving life of the bandit, found it so congenial that he concluded to follow the illustrious example of his

former leader and associate; but wanting in the principal traits which had raised the latter to his exalted position, was speedily destroyed and almost precisely in the same manner which he had devised for the overthrow of the renowned Marcelino. Previous to this, however, Maldonado, in imitation of his former chieftain, and availing himself of the defenceless state of the town of Guasdualito, attempted to carry off from thence la Villafañe, a lady celebrated for her beauty. With this intent, he brought to her door a horse already saddled for her, and commanded her to mount and follow him. This she indignantly refused to do; but finding all entreaties and resistance of no avail, she seized some poison from a drawer at hand, and with resolution worthy of a Roman matron, placed it to her lips, exclaiming, as she did so, that she would surely swallow it if he did not instantly quit her presence. The threat proved successful; for the bandit, awed by her heroism, left her.

The business of the pampas required us to be up at the first peep of dawn. A cup of coffee and milk, mixed with ground parched corn—which I would recommend to all travellers on long journeys of this sort—served us until breakfast time. I amused myself during the day sketching in company with my friend, Mr. Thomas, while the men made their preparations for a grand hunt among the cattle of the estate. The most important of these arrangements was that of manufacturing from hides sufficient lazos for the sport. There is a marked difference between the skins of bullocks raised in the shady parts of the

Llanos and those roaming wild over the deserts of the Apure. Although the former are much thicker, the lazos made from the hides of cattle constantly exposed to the sun's rays are infinitely stronger. The lazo is easily made. A fresh hide, spread upon the ground with the hair downward, is neatly cut into a long strap two inches wide. This is twisted into a tight thong and stretched out to dry between two posts, after which it is well rubbed with fat. When thoroughly dried, a loop is made at one end; through this, when required for use, the thong is passed, forming the noose or lazo proper, while the other end is firmly tied to the horse's tail, using its long hair for the purpose. In other parts of South America they fasten the lazo to a ring in the saddle; but this arrangement, besides causing too great strain upon the horse's back, is fraught with danger to the rider in case of a recoil from the thong if a break occur. The thorough training which horses receive in the Llanos is invaluable in such cases, as not only does the success of the chase depend on the readiness with which he obeys his rider, but even after the game is secured with the lazo, it is necessary that the horse should range instantly on a line with the struggling victim; but unless this is effected before the strain comes upon the lazo, the horse and his rider are inevitably overthrown. The hunter, at the moment of using the lazo, coils a portion of the thong, which he holds with his left hand, and with the rest forms the running noose, which is repeatedly whirled around his head to keep it open. When within reach of his mark, he aims at the animal's head and throws the noose in such a

manner as to cause a rapid uncoiling of the thong in his left hand. Some Llaneros are so expert as to entangle at the same instant the feet and head of the animal, on which he is quickly brought to the ground.

We were joined at El Frio by another party of cattle hunters, under the leadership of an old acquaintance, Colonel Castejon, widely celebrated in the Llanos for great bravery and skill in the pursuits of the country. He came to help us in the hunt after wild cattle, and to help himself to as many animals as he could drive home with his party. We also had the honor of a visit from the Governor of the Province, Señor Arciniega, a jovial, talkative, and well-informed functionary, and the most accomplished marksman of the Apure. It was therefore proposed to have a grand shooting match in the open field, and with this view we all started one morning for a creek called Macanillal, about three miles distant, intending to use the crocodiles, by far the most difficult animal to shoot, as targets. On entering the woody banks of the creek, we were agreeably surprised to discover on the soft mud evident proofs that we had come in the right direction, not only for our anticipated sport with the water monsters, but also that we were likely to have a brush with even a more formidable antagonist—the jaguar. Footprints of this splendid animal were so numerous, that we forgot for a time the crocodiles and made diligent search for the nobler game. We had small success, however, having no dogs with us to drive him from the jungle; for, un-

less he has the advantage over his adversaries, the jaguar never shows himself in the day-time.

As we came in sight of the water, I was astonished at seeing its whole surface bubbling as if in a state of effervescence, and at finding also on nearer inspection that this was occasioned by the blowing close to the water's surface of millions of *coporos*. Other varieties of fish were also so abundant, that we shot many near the shore, among them a very fine catfish.

The report of the guns brought to the surface numbers of crocodiles, which we prepared to assail from the high bank of the creek. To our honorable guest, the Governor, was conceded the privilege of shooting the first, which he did with great accuracy, sending a ball directly through one of the creature's eyes. Still the shot did not kill him instantly, as would have been the result with any other animal; and he plunged through the creek for a time at a furious rate, lashing the water with his powerful tail, and causing great commotion among the finny multitude. The other crocodiles in lieu of being alarmed with the uproar, were only rendered more inquisitive, dashing forward with gleaming eyes and tusks, which so fascinated my friend the English artist, as rather endangered his safety in his eagerness to get a thorough view of the reptiles. Forgetting his proximity to the precipice, he approached it so nearly as to miss his footing, and would doubtless have rolled into one of the open jaws below him, but for the prompt assistance of a companion, who caught him as he was in the act of falling.

From the same place where the first shot was fired, we succeeded in killing or wounding not less than twenty crocodiles; but the banks being high and precipitous, we could not secure the carcases. One of these, which lay stranded on a sand bank across the creek, being characterized by a singular hump on his back, which added to his already monstrous size, I felt a great desire to examine more closely. To accomplish this, it was necessary to ford the creek lower down, where I was assured the water was sufficiently low to allow of walking over. The undertaking was not, however, without considerable risk from the numerous sting-rays and caribes. But my interest in all pertaining to Nature's works helped me over to the other side, whither I was accompanied by Roseliano, a youth attached to my family, famed as a dare-devil. With his assistance I dragged the crocodile partly out of water, and was examining the load which nature had placed upon his back, when Roseliano perceived a movement of one of his eyes, the other having been shattered by the bullet; we supposed he had been by this time quite dead. My young companion, who had expressed his suspicions that the crocodile was only feigning death, wishing to ascertain the truth, proposed stabbing him in the armpit with his dagger. Before permitting this, I insisted upon securing the jaws by means of a large stake which we sharpened at one end and plunged into his nostrils, and I then leaned upon it with the whole weight of my body. This precaution saved my companion, but came very near proving fatal to myself, as the instant the crocodile felt the cold steel

between his ribs he raised his enormous head, lifting me at least a foot from the ground; but was prevented from injuring me by the stake which he caught between his powerful tusks, shattering it to splinters, and then retreated to the middle of the creek. His triumph was, however, of short duration; for, the blood oozing in torrents from his wounds, he quickly fell a prey to thousands of hungry caribes.

Sir Robert Schomburgh relates an incident which occurred during his ascent of the river Berbice, and which further demonstrates the tenacity of life in the cayman. "One was fired at, floating, and the ball took off the end of the snout; it received another immediately afterward in the hinder part of the skull which appeared to have taken effect; still, the Indians were not sparing in their blows, and when there was not much likelihood of its possessing a spark of life, it was deposited on the bow of one of the corials. While the corial was drawn across the rapids, two of the Arawaaks got courage and took it up in order to lay it in a more convenient place; they had just effected this, when at one bound it jumped out into the river and disappeared. The Indians looked quite stupefied, and never afterward could be persuaded to touch a cayman."

The creek of Macanillal is also famous for its many water-dogs, or *perros de agua* (Myopotamus coypos) and nutrias. The latter is a large species of otter with a fine glossy fur. The former resembles a beaver very closely, but has a round tail similar to that of the opossum. Both animals live in the water,

coming out occasionally to sun themselves on the sand banks. In a hut near the scene of our last crocodile adventure I saw a skin of the water-dog which measured five feet in length, exclusive of the tail; but although I often made diligent search for this singular amphibious animal, I never had an opportunity of making his acquaintance. Like the otter he is extremely shy, and only the practised eye of an Indian can trace him near the surface of the water when he rises to breathe.

CHAPTER XII.

BIRDS OF ILL OMEN AND CARRION HAWKS.

The distant bellowing of bulls assembling their herds—sure sign that the tiger was prowling near them—lulled us pleasantly to sleep in our hammock-beds after the fatigues and labors of the day. Not unfrequently we were treated to a serenading chorus of *araguatos* or howling monkeys, and to the hootings of the *titiriji* or tiger-owl of the pampas, whose peculiar cries might be readily mistaken, by an unaccustomed ear, for the angry growl of that spotted bandit of the forest—the jaguar. The neighboring woods were also the haunts of several other species of owls and goat-suckers, whose dreary notes wake mournful echoes by night and fill superstitious imaginations with fearful and foreboding visions.

The tiger-owl, which may be said to rank among the feathered tribe as does the jaguar or American tiger among beasts, is nearly the size of a domestic turkey. Like his powerful prototype, he is spotted with black, and seldom makes himself heard except-

ing at night, when calling on his mate; or during his nocturnal expeditions in the neighborhood of the farmyard. He is then, not only a terror to the defenceless brood, but also to the younger inmates of the house, who look upon him with a kind of superstitious awe, on which account he sometimes escapes punishment.

Less imposing in size than the preceding—although more terrifying in their way—are the *ya-acabó* and the *pavita*—two other species of owl considered harbingers of calamity or death, when heard fluttering around a house. The first portends an approaching death among the inmates, and is therefore looked upon with dread even by men who would not flinch at the sight of the most formidable bull or jaguar. Yet that appalling cry, *ya acabó! ya acabó!*—it is finished! it is finished!—seems so fraught with evil mystery, that few hear it unmoved. The only expedient resorted to, in such cases, is to form a cross with hot ashes in front of the house, which, it is believed, will drive away this ill-omened messenger. The *pavita*—although not larger than a turtle-dove, is also considered *pajaro de mal agüero*—a bird of ill-omen—being no less—they say—than the departed spirit of some good-natured relative come to warn his kindred against approaching calamity. In these cases, as it is believed that nothing is so acceptable to the poor soul as a few Pater Nosters and Ave Marias, they usually try to disembarrass themselves of the unwelcome visitor by reciting aloud several of these prayers, after crossing themselves twice with much devotion. Whenever this owl's dreaded cry is heard, it is certain to

be followed by a scene of great confusion and dismay: the children run to the women and hide behind their skirts; the women seek protection from the men; while these content themselves with muttering the holy invocation *Ave Maria Purisima!* which is ever with them the favorite talisman against danger.

Great varieties of goat-suckers—not unlike huge butterflies fluttering in the light evening breeze—also make their appearance at sundown, when may be heard their singularly harsh notes closely resembling human articulations.

"The harmless, unoffending goat-sucker, from the time of Aristotle down to the present day"—says Waterton in his "Wanderings"—"has been in disgrace with man. Father has handed down to son, and author to author, that this nocturnal thief subsists by milking the flocks. Poor injured little bird of night! how sadly hast thou suffered, and how foul a stain has inattention to facts put upon thy character! Thou hast never robbed man of any part of his property, nor deprived the kid of a drop of milk."

"When the moon shines bright, you may have a fair opportunity of examining the goat-sucker. You will see it close by the cows, goats, and sheep, jumping up every now and then, under their bellies. Approach a little nearer—he is not shy, 'he fears no danger for he knows no sin.' See how the nocturnal flies are tormenting the herd, and with what dexterity he springs up and catches them as fast as they alight on the belly, legs and udder of the animals. Observe how quiet they stand, and how sensible they seem of his good offices, for they neither strike at him,

nor hit him with their tails, nor tread on him, nor try to drive him away as an uncivil intruder. Were you to dissect him and inspect his stomach, you would find no milk there. It is full of the flies which have been annoying the herd.

"The prettily mottled plumage of the goat-sucker, like that of the owl, wants the lustre which is observed in the feathers of the birds of day. This, at once, marks him as a lover of the pale moon's nightly beams. There are nine species here" (in Demerara). "The largest appears nearly the size of the English wood-owl. Its cry is so remarkable, that having once heard it, you will never forget it. When night reigns over these immeasurable wilds, whilst lying in your hammock, you will hear this goat-sucker lamenting like one in deep distress. A stranger would never conceive it to be the cry of a bird. He would say it was the departing voice of a midnight murdered victim, or the last wailing of Niobe for her poor children, before she was turned into stone. Suppose yourself in hopeless sorrow, begin with a high loud note, and pronounce, 'ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha,' each note lower and lower, till the last is scarcely heard, pausing a moment or two betwixt every note, and you will have some idea of the moaning of the largest goat-sucker in Demerara.

"Four other species of the goat-sucker articulate some words so distinctly, that they have received their names from the sentences they utter, and absolutely bewilder the stranger on his arrival at these parts. The most common one sits down close by your door, and flies and alights three or four yards before you, as

you walk along the road, crying, 'Who are you, who, who, who are you?' Another bids you, 'Work away, work, work, work away.' A third cries mournfully, 'Willy, come go, Willy, Willy, Willy come go.' And high up the country a fourth tells you 'Whip poor Will, whip, whip, whip poor Will.'" *

There is a bird, however, among these nocturnal serenaders which impresses you with very different feelings from those produced by the owl species: this is the *Gallineta de monte* or forest-hen, a most beautiful creature both in color and in shape, and not unlike a water-hen in general appearance: the eyes especially are peculiarly pretty, being of a brilliant ruby color and scintillate like fire. These birds sing in concert, and their song—a lively chatter—has a mystic fascination I am unable to describe. They are also considered delicate eating; but unfortunately are very difficult to catch, for even after being shot, unless wounded in the leg, they can outstrip the swiftest hound, although their wings, being very small, avail them little. Nature, however, has provided them with long yellow legs for the purpose.

The ponds and lagoons of the savannas are literally crowded with other individuals of the feathered tribe, whose lively notes and incessant chatterings contribute likewise to enliven the night. The most conspicuous among them are various species of teal-ducks, such as *güires* and *yaguasos*, and a long-legged plover—*alcaravan*.—This last has the peculiarity of uttering a long, shrill sound at hourly intervals, thus marking every

* Wanderings in South America.

hour of the night after the manner of a clock's alarum. It is easily domesticated in the houses, where it renders some service, not only by marking time, but also by giving warning of the approach of strangers.

The *aruco* is another bird of large size, whose drum-like notes are often heard in the stillness of night. In size and plumage it greatly resembles a turkey; but its flesh is so spongy, that in lifting one of these uncouth birds from the ground, it appears like a mere bundle of feathers. The wings of the male are provided with a pair of sharp spurs, with which, when fighting, they greatly injure one another.

Another feature of the cattle-farm is the great number of carrion vultures and other birds of prey constantly hovering around the houses and corrals, attracted thither by the carcasses of dead animals. The most conspicuous among them is the *zamuro* or *gallinazo*, (Cathartes Atratus,) that constant companion of rude civilization in all tropical countries, but an indolent, greedy and disgusting associate. As, however, they occasionally render service in the capacity of scavengers, they are generally tolerated among the fowl of the farm-yard. It is a gregarious bird, and collects in large flocks on the roof and fences, where, with knowing glances, they seem to be scanning all the actions of the inmates. I often amused myself in threatening them with a missile of some sort; but they never appeared to notice it, until they perceived me to be in earnest: then with wings half spread and leaning forward, they watched intently the moment when I should hurl it at them to evade it by flight or a dodge of the head.—They build their nests in holes which they dig

in the ground. Their young are white, gradually changing to black as they grow older, and only two are raised by the parent every year. Although essentially carrion feeders, the olfactories of these birds are not so sensitive as to discover for them a dead animal —as many suppose;—but their sight is very good. They fly to immense heights, and thence examine every portion of the ground below them. In doing this they may often be observed on motionless wing, whirling round and round in graceful evolutions.

With the *zamuro* is often associated another carrion vulture, the *oripopo* or turkey-buzzard, (Vultur aura,) of the same size and with similar habits to the former. It differs however, from its relative in color—which is dark brown—and in having its neck more destitute of feathers. It is also more elegant in form and in its graceful evolutions through the air than the black vulture. The turkey-buzzard has a wide geographical range, having been met by Audubon as far north as Pennsylvania, and by Darwin in the arid plains of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. When soaring through the upper regions of the air, it can be at once recognized by its long, sweeping flight, accompanied by a buzzing sound, much like the gust of the whirlwind, and perfectly audible from a great distance.

The *Rey-Zamuro*, or king of the vultures, (Vultur papa,) larger than the foregoing, is the most beautiful of its kind. Its plumage, resembling down in softness and fineness, is of a pearly white, excepting the wings, which are tipped with black. The breast and neck, although entirely bare of feathers, are decked in the most brilliant tint of blue, orange, and red, while a sort

of membranous excrescence crowns the head, giving it a truly royal appearance.

This King of the vultures has also very aristocratic habits, never associating with any, not even those of his own tribe. It is a remarkable fact that when he alights upon a carcass, amidst a flock of other vultures, all these last retire, or make a circle round the banquet. When his majesty has dined, he flies off, uttering a loud cry, and only then his subjects venture to approach the carrion.

There is in the more elevated part of the adjoining province of Barinas, another bird of the same class—Vultur barbatus—which partakes of the eagle and the vulture, but is larger than either. It is called in consequence *gavilucho*—eagle-hawk—and has been seen at times descending toward the plains. The legs and wings are very long and powerful. It is said to be very handsome, but it is extremely shy of man. The plumage is bluish, red, white and yellow. This bird joins to the boldness and cruelty of the eagle, the loathsome voracity of the vultures. It prefers live flesh, especially that of small quadrupeds, and preys principally upon rabbits, goats, sheep and even young calves. It raises only one brood in a season, and builds its nest amidst the most inaccessible ledges of the Cordilleras.

I will close the list of the carrion birds of Venezuela with enumerating two others, nearly allied to the hawk, but partaking also of the characteristics of the eagle. These are the *caricari* and *chiriguare* (Polyborus Brasiliensis and P. Chimango) corresponding to the *caracaras* and *carrancha* of Brazil and

Buenos Ayres, concerning which Darwin has given this graphic account:

"The *caracaras* are from their structure placed among the eagles: we shall soon see how ill they become so high a rank. In their habits they will supply the place of our carrion crows, magpies and ravens, a tribe of birds widely distributed over the rest of the world, but entirely absent in South America.

"The carranchas, together with the chimango, constantly attend in numbers the estancias and slaughtering-houses. If an animal dies on the plain, the gallinazo commences the feast, and then the two species of Polyborus pick the bones clean. These birds, although thus commonly feeding together, are far from being friendly. When the carrancha is quietly seated on the branch of a tree or on the ground, the chimango often continues for a long time flying backward and forward, up and down, in a semicircle, trying each time at the bottom of the curve to strike its larger relative. Although the carranchas frequently assemble in numbers, they are not gregarious; for in desert places they may be seen solitary, or more commonly in pairs.

"The carranchas are said to be very crafty, and to steal great numbers of eggs. They attempt, also, together with the chimango, to pick off the scabs from the sore backs of horses and mules. The poor animal, on the one hand, with its ears down and its back arched, and, on the other hand, the hovering bird, eyeing at the distance of a yard the disgusting morsel, form a picture, which has been described by Captain Head with his own peculiar spirit and ac-

curacy. These false eagles rarely kill any living bird or animal; and their vulture-like, necrophagous habits are very evident to any one who has fallen asleep on the desolate plains of Patagonia, for when he wakes he will see, on each surrounding hillock, one of these birds patiently watching him with an evil eye; it is a feature in the landscape of these countries, which will be recognized by every one who has wandered over them. If a party of men go out hunting with dogs and horses, they will be accompanied during the day by several of these attendants. After feeding, the uncovered craw protrudes; at such times, and indeed, generally, the carrancha is an inactive, tame, and cowardly bird. Its flight is heavy and slow, like that of an English rook. It seldom soars; but I have twice seen one at a great height gliding through the air with great ease. It runs, (in contradistinction to hopping,) but not quite so quickly as some of its congeners. At times the carrancha is noisy, but is not generally so; its cry is loud, very harsh and peculiar, and may be likened to the sound of the Spanish guttural *g*, followed by a rough double *r r*; when uttering this cry, it elevates its head higher and higher, till at last, with its beak wide open, the crown almost touches the lower part of the head. This fact, which has been doubted, is quite true."

These birds are, however, a great blessing to the inhabitants of the Llanos, who are indebted to them, not only for the destruction of vast numbers of snakes and other reptiles, but for the service they render conjointly with the vultures in consuming the offal near houses. They seek their food both in dry lands

and amidst the swampy borders of rivers; on the one they find serpents and lizards in abundance; in the other terrapins, frogs and small crocodiles. They are peculiar in always killing their prey before commencing to devour it. If the *caricari* meet with a serpent or young crocodile large enough to oppose a long resistance, he approaches it sideways, shielded by one of his wings spread out, and striking his prey near the head with his bill, retires to a short distance to watch the result. A second blow is usually fatal, upon which, seizing his victim in his claws, he tears it with his bill. The sluggish tortoises and terrapins are easy prey for the *caricari;* these he renders helpless by turning them upon their backs, then with his powerful bill tears out the entrails.

Singing birds are of great numbers and varieties in the Llanos; these are mostly of the oriole species, all of which seem to delight in the vicinity of man. They usually select some tree near the house, and from its slender topmost branches, weave their hanging nests beyond reach of mischievous boys and monkeys. One of these songsters, the *gonzal*, had his nest close by the ropes of my hammock, where every morning before sunrise he awakened me by his sweetly plaintive notes; and so fascinated was I by this charming neighbor, that I always remained long after the reveille, listening to his delicious music.

There is another closely allied species, far superior to this or any other bird of the kind with which I am acquainted. It is the troupial, whose powerful notes can only be likened to strains of the violin. It is easily domesticated in houses, and learns readily any

air from hearing it whistled. I have one of these birds at home (in New York) which sings the Cachuca, Yankee Doodle, and various other tunes, besides distinctly whistling the name of a person. Its predominant colors are rich orange and shining black, with white spots on the wings and bill in beautiful contrast. It is a dangerous pet, however, if at large in a house, attacking strangers furiously, and always aiming at the eyes.

The *arrendajo*, or mocking-oriole, is perhaps the most extraordinary of its kind, on account of its imitative proclivities, mimicking every sound with such exactness, that he goes by the name of mocking-bird among the colonists of Demerara; according to Waterton, "His own song is sweet, but very short. If a toucan be yelping in the neighborhood, he drops it, and imitates him. Then he will amuse his protector with the cries of the different species of woodpecker, and when the sheep bleat he will distinctly answer them. Then comes his own song again; and if a puppy dog or a guinea fowl interrupt him, he takes them off admirably, and by his different gestures during the time, you would conclude that he enjoys the sport."

The arrendajo is, besides, a beautiful bird, and considered by ornithologists a model of symmetry; his predominant color is a glossy black, with the exception of his belly, rump and half the tail, which are of a bright yellow. On each wing also he has a spot of the same color. His beak is tinged of a delicate shade of lemon, while his eyes are sky blue, the pupil being a deeper shade of the same.

THE RODEO.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RODEO.

We had long been impatiently awaiting the command for a general turnout and chase among the legions of wild cattle grazing in the far horizon; and when at length the day was appointed for a *rodeo* or grand hunt, the universal gratification was boundless.

It is customary in all large cattle farms to assemble from time to time the cattle of certain districts for the purpose of selecting those which require branding and marking, and also to allow the neighboring farmers to separate from the herds many stray animals belonging to them, which, from the open nature of the plains, it is impossible to keep within the boundaries of their own savannas. This operation cannot be accomplished without a great number of able and expert riders, who, on a given day, surround a large area of country and drive toward one centre all the cattle that may be found within the selected space. An extended circle or ring is thus formed, enclosing a great horde of wild animals; these are kept in check

by the well-concerted evolutions of the *vaqueros* until the appointed rendezvous is reached, where, after allowing the cattle to cool down, the different brands are selected; hence the name of *rodeo*, from *rodear*, to surround.

The object on this occasion was not only to separate all the calves that required branding, but also to collect a large drove of oxen, so as to furnish our extensive potreros of San Pablo de Paya with marketable beeves.

Our first foray against the horned tenants of the wilderness would thus assume an importance seldom witnessed in that retired corner of the republic; as also in addition to our own force, we counted upon the assistance of the vaqueros from the neighboring cattle farms of Caucagua, La Yagua, and others bordering these savannas. Due notice was accordingly sent to the respective owners of those estates to muster on a certain day all their forces upon the field.

The area selected for the hunt embraced at least fifteen miles *à la ronde*. The hunters, in squads of six or eight, proceeded on the afternoon of the day before the hunt to their stations at various points of the savanna, having instructions to start at early dawn for the appointed centre. We of the staff made a simultaneous move from the house, driving before us, without distinction, all the animals we encountered on the route. The cattle being so unexpectedly roused from their slumbers, naturally endeavored to fly from their pursuers. Soon, however, meeting those from opposite directions, they whirled in mad despair, vainly endeavoring to break through the ex-

tended line of horsemen, who were constantly galloping about the struggling mass with shouts and thrusts from their steel-pointed *garrochas*.

At the commencement it was a truly interesting sight to watch the many groups of cattle, deer, wild boars, dogs, foxes, and other wild quadrupeds coming in from all directions as if impelled by one common instinct; but no sooner did that living ring commence closing upon them, than, scared by the confusion and uproar of the scene, their terror quickly grew to frenzy, and they ran from side to side bellowing, grunting, howling as they went. Solely intent upon the danger that menaced them, the mother forgot her offspring, and listened no more to their painful lamentations; the lover abandoned his beloved, seeking only his own safety in disgraceful flight; and even the fierce bull, forgetting for a moment that he is sovereign of those realms, lost his natural spirit of brave defiance, and rushed blindly off in the train of the frightened multitude. As if to increase the grandeur of the spectacle, a *garzero*, which had established itself on the borders of a creek hard by, also caught the alarm, and at our approach flew up in the air with a tremendous crashing of wing and bill, leaving their young to care for themselves, and with their discordant and piercing cries to swell the uproar of the scene. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of this vast multitude of frightened cranes and herons of all sorts which fluttered overhead at that moment; so great was their number that they spread over an extent of several miles, and actually for a time cast a deep shadow over the landscape.

Not less than eight or ten thousand head of cattle were brought within the ring formed of more than a hundred horsemen, who, in preventing the escape of the animals, were compelled to expose themselves and their noble steeds to the vindictiveness of the bulls, which were constantly rushing upon the lines in their endeavors to regain the open prairie. Whenever this was attempted, a horseman galloped boldly upon the fugitive, and by interposing himself between the open field and the bull, forced the latter back to the herd. Wonderfully adroit were the herdsmen in their avoidance of the repeated strokes aimed at them by the bulls, even when it appeared impossible to escape being caught between the animal's horns. The *garrocha* played an important part in repelling these attacks. This instrument, only second in importance to the lazo when in the hands of expert riders, is made of the slender, yet tough stem, of the *alvarico* palm, (ænocarpus cubarro,) by merely sharpening the top end to a point, or surmounting it with an iron head, around which a number of loose rings of the same metal are affixed; these, when shaken close to the animal's ear, frighten him off with the rattling sound they produce. The shaft of the goad is fully ten feet long, and although not thicker than a walking-stick, can bear an immense amount of pressure without breaking. As a weapon of aggression, this slender palm stem has become justly celebrated throughout the country, from the fact of having supplied the primitive bands of patriots who first dared to oppose the tyrannical rule of Spain with ready-made lances in the wilderness. The manner in which

Llaneros make use of the garrocha is quite extraordinary. When in pursuit of a bull which they purpose turning back to the *rodeo*, if the animal be swifter than the horse, the rider always manages to reach him with the point of his spear. This he thrusts into the bull's hide, just above the shoulder-blade, and then leans forward and rests the whole weight of his body upon the shaft, assisted in it by his intelligent charger. The equilibrium of the bull is thus usually destroyed, and he rolls headlong upon the ground. These falls are often sufficient to prevent further attempts at escape, in which case the bull is easily led into the *rodeo*. This performance, however, is one of the most dangerous practised among Llaneros, and is undertaken only by the most skilful and experienced riders, as, should the spear glance off while the hunter is leaning upon it, or should he happen to overturn the bull in front of his horse, he will in either case receive a terrific fall, and in the latter event, probably come into collision with the fallen animal.

From the midst, and above all the heads of that tumultuous assemblage of wild animals, rose the shaggy frontlet of a black bull, whose martial air and fearless step seemed to proclaim him the patriarch of the herd. An experienced Llanero, intently watching all his movements from afar, observed to those near him, that they would soon have fresh sport; and that "if any one prized the skin of his horse, he would do well to look to his spurs;" meaning that the black bull evidently intended mischief. Mr. Thomas, who was busily sketching the novel scene before him, un-

accustomed to the jargon of the Llanos, did not understand this remark, and therefore quietly continued his occupation. The next moment the bull was in our midst, charging first upon Captain Valor, one of the best riders on the field, who, in spite of his name, hastily spurred his steed out of reach; but the bull still pursuing, charged again and again upon him, and doubtless the last attempt would have been fatal to either horse or cavalier, had not the bull been checked in his final onset by accidentally plunging one of his legs into the hole of an armadillo, which fortunate circumstance gave the captain time to distance his pursuer. The bull next sought to vent his rage on the incautious artist, who, one leg crossed over the neck of his horse as support for his sketch-book, sat evidently absorbed in contemplation of the powerful and daring brute, with whose ferocious nature he was totally unacquainted. Having never before attended sports of the kind, my friend paid little regard to the menacing attitude of the animal, who rushed upon him with a fearful bellow that made us tremble for his fate. But for some unaccountable reason, the bull after one or two ineffectual attempts to strike his intended victim, wheeled about and disappeared among the tangled jungle bordering the creek, apparently indignant at the nonchalance with which John Bull received the advances of his namesake. Fearing the recurrence of similar attacks, which might have a less fortunate termination, it was decided to disembarrass ourselves of so uncomfortable a neighbor; with this object, the requisite number of horsemen provided with lazos were sent to capture

and subdue him. Instead of seeking safety in precipitate flight, as is generally the case with wild bulls, this one unflinchingly stood his ground, and neither shouts nor menaces could induce him to abandon the threatening attitude he had assumed. It was indeed a splendid sight to behold that proud monarch of the horned tribe bidding defiance to all about him, his huge and shaggy head, surmounted by a pair of pointed, powerful horns, high in air, and with an expression of countenance that was almost diabolical. His savage upper lip looked as if curled in contempt of his antagonists, and his eyes gleamed with fury in the light of the morning sun. Occasionally with his fore feet he ploughed up the earth, which, falling in showers upon him, he swept from his sides with his tail, uttering all the while a sort of suppressed roar resembling distant thunder. Then came the furious charge, when every one was compelled to run for his life, as nothing could arrest his headlong course. Blinded with rage, he spared not even those of his own species, killing two heifers instantly, and wounding a bull so severely that he died shortly afterward. Each time the men whirled the lazo to throw it over his head, he dashed forward with such rapidity as to disconcert their aim, until, finally, a bold and agile sambo, Sarmiento by name, who acted as caporal, and of whom we shall say more hereafter, dismounting from his horse and seizing the red blanket from his saddle, prepared to face the bull without the encumbrance of the lazo. His intention was to bewilder or *torear* him by a succession of such feats of agility as are usually practised by matadors in bull

fights; and so successful was he, that in one of the animal's furious charges, he succeeded in grasping and holding his tail; and in spite of the efforts the bull made to strike him with his horns, Sarmiento followed his movements so closely, that by a dexterous twist of the tail he succeeded in overthrowing the brute upon his side; he then drew the tail between the hind legs, and as this completely deprives the animal of all power of rising, he was enabled to hold him until others came to his assistance. Then, to prevent further mischief, the men proceeded to saw off the tops of his horns and to perform upon him other usual operations. These precautions, however, proved quite unnecessary, as the bull, exhausted by rage and loss of blood, shortly afterward dropped upon the ground and expired.

In spite of the vigilance and constant efforts of the men to keep the animals within the *rodeo*, several other bulls managed to break through the ranks. The only method of bringing them back was by using the all-potent lazo, and two men, one of them thus equipped, were despatched after the fugitive, which on being noosed, was by the second man speedily thrown upon his side by means of that dangerous appendage, the tail, in the management of which the Llaneros of Venezuela are so famous. This accomplished, they pierced the thick cartilage which divides the nostrils with the point of a dagger; one end of the thong was then passed through the wound, while the other remained fastened to the horse's tail; the Llanero, then mounting his steed, jerked the end attached to the bull, which brought the prostrate beast

at once to his feet, when he was marched off to his destination without further trouble, literally led by the nose.

Another method of arresting a bull in his flight, is by a bold manœuvre termed *colear*, and which consists, as already stated, in availing themselves of the animal's tail to overthrow him when at full speed; but that is not easy of accomplishment, as the bull has then such entire freedom of movement. The horse also must be perfectly well trained to these hazardous undertakings, and should obey instantly the slightest pull of the bit; for if the bull turns suddenly upon his pursuer, the chances are ten to one that the horse will be severely wounded. The rider first gallops close to the rear of the bull, and seizing his tail with one hand, gives it a turn or two around his wrist to prevent its slipping. When thus prepared, he urges his horse forward, until the heads of the two animals are on a "dead-heat;" then quickly turning in an oblique direction, and exerting all his strength, he pulls the bull toward him, and does not relinquish his hold until he perceives that the enemy is tottering, when he is easily overthrown from the great impetus imparted by their rapid pace. Some men are so dexterous that they can colear with both hands at the same time; which necessarily gives greater power over the bull, enabling the rider to bring him down much more readily. The horse, in this case, left to his own well-taught guidance, assists the manœuvres of his rider, pushing forward at the instant he perceives that his master is prepared for the pull, and turning about also at the right moment. How won-

derful the instinct of these noble creatures! that teaches them so readily the importance of the slightest movement, on which often depends, not only the success of the enterprise, but their own safety, as well as that of their masters. If too powerful resistance is offered at the outset by the bull, as is sometimes the case, the rider still clings to the tail of his adversary, and throwing himself off his horse while at full speed, the impetus combined with his weight and strength never fail in bringing the bull like a fallen giant to the ground; then the man quickly drawing the tail between the hind legs, awaits the arrival of his companions to assist in securing the prize.

It was often matter of surprise to me in what manner the Llaneros, notwithstanding the thorough training of the horses, contrived their speedy approach to the rear of the bulls, as these were usually considerably ahead at the start. On one occasion, I was regretting that my pony was too small to keep pace with the hunters, when one of the men, who was mounted on a prototype of Rosinante—on which, nevertheless, he had performed prodigies of strength—turned to me and said, "*Vaya, niño*, let me show you that this is not the fault of the horse, but that of the rider;" whereupon we exchanged horses, and off he went after a powerful bull just escaped. Not many minutes elapsed before I lost sight of horse and rider in a cloud of dust raised by the beast in its fall.

Some hours elapsed before the tremendous excitement and confusion of the wild melée described above had sufficiently subsided to render the forms of men

and cattle visible through the clouds of dust and ashes raised by the trampling of so many animals. The grass, at this period parched by the sun and reduced to ashes in various places by the usual conflagrations, mingled with the dust and rose in dense columns, which from afar might have been mistaken for the dreaded monsoon.

In the mean while the distracted mothers ran from side to side, lowing piteously for their missing young. Here and there fierce duellos among rival bulls took place for the possession of some shaggy one of the softer sex. Butting their huge fronts together, and goring each other with their sharp-pointed horns, they fought with the courage and skill of accomplished gladiators, tearing up the earth in wild fury, and filling the air with their deep, savage bellowings. A crowd of admirers from amidst the herd formed a circle around the combatants, and if any from among their number evinced the least disposition to interfere, he was immediately chased away by the others, so that there might be fair play while the fight lasted. Often these encounters proved fatal to one of the belligerents, as neither will yield the palm without a desperate resistance.

The bellowing of thousands of animals, with the yells and deafening shouts of the men galloping about the plain, waving their ponchos and rattling their *garrochas*, combined to give the scene more the appearance of a fiendish melodrama, than a purely pastoral assemblage of men and cattle.

The confusion having at length subsided, four of the ablest horsemen, penetrating the living mass,

which, as they advanced, surged on either side like the waves of the sea, commenced the difficult task of separating the animals intended for the brand, and those belonging to our neighbors. This occasioned another series of evolutions, which only men trained to such exercises could have accomplished successfully.

It is usual in all cattle-farms to cut a notch or two in the animal's ear at the time they are branded, for the purpose of recognizing them more readily from a distance, a precaution which is particularly serviceable on occasions like that just described, it being impossible to read the brand when the creatures are crowded into a herd. Although most of the calves had not the notch, they belong by right to the owner of the mother, even if they are found on the lands of another party. Of it the vaqueros availed themselves in their subsequent apportioning of the different lots of cattle. This they accomplished in the most expeditious manner by riding boldly at the animals in question, hastening or checking their progress through the herd as the case required. Thus by repeated evolutions of the sort, they finally brought the animals to the edge of the ring, where an opening was purposely left for their escape, and then the nearest horseman drove them in among a small body of tame cattle stationed a short distance from the *rodeo*. These violent manœuvrings could not be accomplished, however, without endangering at every step the security of the entire herd. Each time the drivers turned out an animal the whole mass was thrown into the utmost confusion, and it required the most consummate skill

on the part of the men to prevent the entire dispersion of the cattle. The fearlessness with which the drivers plunged into that labyrinth of savage, panting brutes, advancing close upon the wall of bristling horns which barred their progress, and boldly driving the infuriated creatures before them like a pack of sheep, was truly worthy of admiration. The readiness with which they detected at a distance the mark on the animal's ears was also no less noticeable, singling out such at a glance, and immediately driving them away to their respective groups. When all the brands had thus been apportioned, each owner proceeded to drive away his own herd. We found in these cases—as indeed in all similar ones—the assistance of *madrineros* or trained oxen, of great service in driving a large body of cattle across the plains. A dozen of these oxen were sufficient to lead a vast drove, stopping or advancing at a signal from the overseer, while the vaqueros kept close watch on rear and flank to prevent escape and to urge on the cattle, especially the crowd of stray calves—some of them only a few hours old—which, like a procession of lost children, kept up a continual bewailing for their mothers as if the last ray of hope had departed from them. Although their case was indeed a hard one, and the task of driving them over the rough ground still harder, we were unwilling to leave them behind, hoping to find their mammas among the multitude before us. When within a short distance from the house, we halted to make preparations for the enclosure of the herds. But one of the most dangerous parts of the proceedings yet remained, that of forcing the cattle into the corrals.

The entrance to the *majada*—shaped like a great funnel—was, like the rest of the fences, made of very strong posts, driven into the ground and barred across at intervals with thick rafters of bamboo. Through this funnel, or *manga*, the cattle in small lots were driven at full speed headed by the *madrineros*—those treacherous guides trained to ensnare their kindred—while the horsemen barricaded the mouth of the funnel with the breasts of the poor horses. Every thing proceeded satisfactorily as far as the end of the funnel, the *madrineros*, with all the cunning of semi-civilized brutes, redoubling their pace at the moment of entering the great enclosure. Then their wild brethren, perceiving the treachery, turned upon their captors, and a most fearful struggle ensued. The bulls, in spite of the deafening shouts of the men, and the formidable array of *garrochas* levelled at their heads, endeavored to force their way back to the open plain, and many of them actually succeeded in breaking through the barricade of horses. Thus many noble steeds, which until then had escaped unhurt, met with an inglorious death. That most of the men escaped unhurt, appeared little less than miraculous, as not only were they also exposed at every moment to the vindictive attacks of the bulls, but it often happened that some of them were unhorsed, when they were in imminent danger of being trampled by the retreating foe. The superior skill and intrepidity of man, however, triumphed at length over mere brute resistance, and the whole herd was in a short time securely quartered in the *majada*.

CHAPTER XIV.

BRANDING SCENES.

"Entre tanto en ancha hoguera
Como encendido tizon,
Ya la marca centellea
Con chispas de azul punzó."

VENTURA DE LA VEGA.

It was late in the evening when we partook of our only meal that day, and we afterward retired to rest, but not to sleep, owing to the incessant noise made by the cattle in the corrals, who, during the whole night, were rushing to and fro as if goaded by demons. Sometimes we feared that the fences would give way before their mad onset, while the dust rose in suffocating clouds, filling the atmosphere and mingling with our food, which was thus rendered almost unfit for use. The bellowing, roaring, and moaning of the herd could only be likened to the wild confusion of a battle-field. Many of the savage bulls in their fury turned their horns, sharp as bayonets, against their own kindred. The proud padrote, his dusky mate, and the tender heifer shared alike in the slaughter. The next day numbers lay gored to death in the dust

of the corrals, while others presented ghastly wounds. Soon the carcasses began to putrefy, which, added to the particles of dust floating through the air we breathed, rendered the atmosphere intolerable. Many more of the cattle died of suffocation, and others from an infectious disease induced by the crowded state of the herd and the noxious exhalations from the carcasses. We therefore lost no time in branding them that they might be set free, lest the infection should extend to the whole herd.

Animals affected in this manner exhibit no symptoms of the disease until immediately prior to their demise, when they are observed to stagger a few paces and drop suddenly, as if shot by a rifle ball; and yet the vultures seem to possess an intuitive knowledge of this approaching dissolution, in proof whereof, numbers of these feathery satellites of death can be seen hovering around an animal which the scourge has doomed, although it is apparently still in perfect health. The infection, fortunately, is confined to the horned cattle, no instance of its transmission to other creatures occurring, except in the case of men venturing to skin the carcasses, when it assumes a different form. Persons who have thus exposed themselves are seized with a horrible swelling of the neck, commencing with a pimple not larger than a pin's head, and gradually increasing in size until it extends to the cerebellum. Death is the inevitable result if the patient is not promptly attended by a skilful physician. There were two or three cases of the kind among our own people, but by careful treatment we were fortunate enough to save them. There are, how-

ever, every year many poor fellows in that improvident region, who, not having the same advantages, are often carried away by the distemper.

The branding of cattle, as conducted in extensive establishments, is a real festival for the sport-loving people of the Llanos; and each one feels himself as deeply interested therein as though assisting at a grand bull fight—the time-honored amusement of the descendants of Pelayo, the Cid, and other worthies of like celebrity; and indeed the former, or *hierra*, as that wild pageant is termed, with all its incidents and dangers, all its noise and bustle, is perhaps the grandest spectacle of the kind that could be devised for the entertainment and training of that chivalric race. It is undoubtedly one of the wildest scenes ever beheld in the pampas, and one which afforded me exceeding pleasure from the variety of incident accompanying it. The majada is, in fact, the school in which from infancy the Llanero is trained to conquer or to die in daily struggles with the brute creation. It is a veritable Olympic Circus, where the agility and strength for which he is famed are displayed during the exciting operations performed upon the savage denizens of the savannas, branding and marking the calves, sawing off the horns of furious bulls and converting them into oxen for the improvement of their flesh and disposition.

On the day appointed, all animals confined in the *majada* are driven into the *corralejas* or smaller corrals adjoining the great enclosure, and there packed as closely as possible to prevent the bulls, always ready to strike, from doing much mischief among

their own kindred. Meantime the men prepare their lazos and station themselves according to their respective strength and ability, while the boys kindle a blazing fire in a safe corner of the *majada*, in which the various brands to be used are kept at a red heat. These brands generally represent the initials of the owner, or some sort of hieroglyphic stamp affixed to the end of a long handle. A record of these is kept by the Justice of the Peace in each district; and it is considered a great crime to alter or in any unauthorized manner efface their impression from the skin of animals. The cattle are usually branded on the haunches; but whenever a horse, mule, or mare is sold, the brand in a reversed position is again affixed, this time on its shoulder, followed by the buyer's brand, the same operation being repeated whenever the animal changes hands, so that some poor beasts come at last to be quite disfigured with deep scars.

When all is ready for the fray, the majordomo, climbing to the highest post of the enclosure, from whence he directs operations, gives the signal. Here he keeps an account of the calves branded, by notching a long strip of raw hide. A number of these strips, called *tarja* or tally, are carefully preserved in every cattle farm as a record to be laid before the owner at the year's end in lieu of balance-sheet.

The principal business of the day being that of branding the calves collected at the *rodeo*, two or three men armed with lazos, fearlessly enter the pens at peril of life and limb—for the mothers are ever ready to defend their young—and proceed to drag the calves out singly by means of the lazo,

though not without many obstinate struggles on their part, and the more formidable resistance of their parents, which are kept back at the point of the *garrocha* by men stationed on the fences. The contest, however, is not of very long duration; the calf nearly choked by the lazo, and tormented by a cruel twisting of his tail, springs forward toward the branding place. The moment he passes the threshold, one or two little imps pounce upon the tail, jerking it until they succeed in throwing him down; the lazo is then quickly removed, and the captor hurries back to the pen for another calf. When a number have been thus secured, a man goes round with the brand, and in a very short time the whole lot are stamped with the burning seal of the estate amidst the piteous bellowings and ineffectual kicks of the helpless creatures.

These operations, although performed on young animals, are not so easily accomplished as might be supposed; it being not unusual for full-grown ones to spring over the fences, or force their way through the narrow gate of their pen. At such times, the operators outside are in imminent danger of being assailed by the fugitives, if the latter are not promptly secured by men stationed for the purpose at the gate of the *corralejas*. It becomes a much more serious business when a powerful bull is lazoed. He not only refuses obstinately to be dragged out like a calf, but requires the combined force and skill of all the men to compel him from the pen, although the gate is purposely left wide open. In such cases a picador, climbing to the top of the fence, endeavors to drive

out the animal by repeated thrusts of the goad; that also failing, another lets himself down close to the bull's tail, which he twists violently, and this seldom fails to drive the refractory creature madly out, followed by the shouts and huzzas of his cruel tormentors. The next proceeding is to throw him for the purpose of regaining the lazo, and for the performance of the above-mentioned operations. This, however, is no easy matter, from the frantic plunges of the bull, who has the entire range of the lazo. The only certain method is that of dragging him close upon a post—*botalon*—driven into the ground, where his overthrow is finally accomplished by the united efforts of several men, one grappling his hind legs, another seizing the tail, while two others keep a steady hold of the thong, until the animal, at last exhausted, drops heavily to the ground.

To justly appreciate scenes like these, one must himself behold the dusky athlete battling single-handed with a bull just escaping from the corral. Seizing him by a horn with one hand, the Llanero still holding it watches his opportunity until he can grasp with the other the animal's tail. The bull is then allowed to run as fast as he will, as the greater his speed the more easily his downfall is accomplished. If the bull moves too slowly, a few impressive jerks generally accelerate his speed; but occasionally he returns the compliment by turning fiercely upon his tail-bearer, who, if not very nimble, risks being gored to death; yet his skilful antagonist, not only usually succeeds in evading his attack, but speedily contrives to throw him. No sooner does this occur, than the

vanquished one is surrounded by a host of merry yelling vagabonds, one brandishing a huge knife, which he sharpens on the horns previous to performing the operation which transforms the animal into an ox, and if not previously marked, cuts his ear according to the rule of the estate whose property he is; another holds a red-hot brand, which he implants at once upon the quivering hide; while a third with a small hand-saw cuts off the sharp points of the horns. The whole operation scarcely occupies three minutes' time; but notwithstanding this, the danger is very great if the bull succeed in regaining his feet before it is finished, as, instead of being subdued, no sooner is he free, than he turns upon his assailants in renewed fury, and then those valiant heroes may be seen scattering about the arena like a flock of partridges. With nostrils widely distended, and foaming at the mouth, the bull for an instant stands an embodiment of rage and terror, endeavoring to discover the objects of his vengeance. None, however, are presumptuous enough to await his onset; they would be levelled with the dust in an instant, and his conquerors therefore adopt the wiser policy of a speedy retreat to the highest fence, whence they pour a volley of abuse upon his shaggy head.

Occasionally, while the men were engaged with one bull, several others effected their escape in spite of the men whose business it was to prevent it. The situation of the others then became critical in the extreme, being exposed to the attacks of the fugitives on the one hand, and to those of the prisoner on the other; this last they were often compelled to abandon

in the midst of their labors. Those who held younger animals formed with their bodies a sort of barricade with which to fend off the aggressor, when no other expedient could be resorted to. At times it appeared almost impossible to escape the impetuous charge of the bulls, especially when the men were some distance from the fences; the only remaining means of safety then consisted in throwing themselves flat upon the ground at the moment the bull aimed a stroke, as in that case the animal invariably jumped over their bodies. It is asserted that bulls in charging always close their eyes, thus missing in blind precipitancy many excellent opportunities for avenging the outrages perpetrated on their race. Not so the cows, who are said to keep their eyes fully open when they are bent on mischief, seldom if ever turning from their intended victim without leaving some mark, of either horn or hoof, in token of displeasure.

On one occasion our leader himself very narrowly escaped from one of these infuriate feminalities in spite of his ability in dealing with wild cattle, and his dexterity in avoiding their attacks. We had just entered the *majada*, and were making preparations for the coming frolic. We stood under the shade of a splendid *matapalo* or wild fig-tree growing within the great enclosure, when a cow, which had left her young behind while chased in the savanna, feeling rather uneasy in consequence, cleared the fence of the pen wherein she was confined, and the next moment was among us. All retreated to the fences, excepting our leader, who, ever rather sensitive about turning his back upon an enemy, stood his ground somewhat

protected by the stout body of the tree. The cow at first appeared to pay but little attention to him, making straight for the gate of the *majada*, which she, unfortunately, found strongly barred against her escape. Then retracing her steps, she sought to avenge her evident disappointment upon the gentleman in white, whom she very well recollected having left at the foot of the old *matapalo*. Still the undaunted soldier, although repeatedly urged by his men to fly, scorned the idea of seeking the *talanquera*, or, in other words, climbing the fence in a hurry, thinking at first to avoid the enemy by stepping round and round the tree; but the cow was too cunning to be cheated in this manner. After thus chasing him in vain for a few minutes, she suddenly changed her course, seeking him in the opposite direction, which brought them face to face. Unfortunately, the General, who had that morning been sitting for his likeness in the full costume of the Llanos which he still wore, found himself rather embarrassed in his movements by the wide folds of the *manta*. This prevented him from drawing the sword he had retained, which was his first impulse; and he therefore retreated a few paces into a more open space where he could *torear* her until others came to his assistance. With the subtlety of her sex the cow at once perceived his intentions, and rapidly following his every movement, watched her opportunity to strike him on the side; but he, precisely at the right instant, with great presence of mind threw himself flat upon the ground just as she aimed the blow. Instead, however, of jumping over him, as is usual with bulls in similar cases, the

cow rushed upon him, when his adroitness in grasping one of her fore feet so firmly as to arrest further attack until others came to his relief, prevented any injury beyond a slight scratch on his side and tearing his *manta*.

It is needless to add that after so disrespectful an assault upon the revered person of our leader, the cow received no gentle treatment at the hands of the indignant *vaqueros:* some were for despatching her at once for their evening meal; others, for affixing a dry hide to the end of her tail and letting her loose over the plain; while a few, compassionating her ignorance, among them the aggrieved owner, were only for depriving her of the means of doing further mischief with the horns. This opinion prevailing at last over all others, the ruthless hand of the executioner at once applied the saw to the pride of her head, after which she was allowed to depart in peace. Thus ended a short, but not altogether inglorious struggle, which, but for the cunning and address displayed on both sides, might have terminated fatally to either of the parties engaged in it.

After the *corralejas* had been emptied of their contents, there still remained in the *majada* several bulls at large, which had escaped during the confusion; and many of these not yet having been operated upon, another most exciting chase was afforded to the indefatigable and athletic hunters. The narrowness of the field, however, which precluded the use of horses, and the fact that each bull required to be captured with the lazo, occasioned serious obsta-

cles and much risk to the men engaged therein. Lack of volunteers there was none, and among them a powerful red-haired zambo, which freak of nature had obtained for him the sobriquet of *colorado*—the red man.

This fellow enjoyed a wide reputation in the country for his exploits, both in field and corral, and on this occasion proved himself deserving of the fame which he had heretofore achieved. It was he who now first led the charge. Seizing a lazo of long dimensions, contrary to usual practice, he proceeded to coil it on his right hand, securing the end upon his left. Then, cautiously approaching a formidable black bull, which stood alone in the centre of the *majada*, he sent the whole lazo, noose and all, uncoiling like a snake through the air until it reached the animal's head. Although the distance must have been thirty paces, we had the satisfaction of seeing the noose settle round his neck as truly as if placed there by the practised hand of a hangman. From this moment, Colorado was unanimously proclaimed master of the lazo, an honor which he enjoyed to the end of the performances, as all that remained in this case to be accomplished by the others was merely to pull the lazo in order to bring the bull up to the botalon or upright post, which served the double purpose of subduing stake for the bulls, and training post for the boys. To it one or more young bulls were usually brought at the end of the day's work, and the boys compelled to mount them in the manner described in a previous chapter; the animals are then set loose amidst the crowd of assembled quadrupeds, which are evidently amazed at the singular spectacle.

We witnessed several exhibitions of the kind in the *majada*, whenever we were present at the branding of the cattle; but never do I recollect any serious accident occurring to the little riders. Thus it is that the Llaneros educate their boys from infancy to the severest exercises of their profession, so that they in turn may teach the same to their own children.

Not always, however, is the Llanero's triumph over the brute creation obtained so easily, for many are the instances in which the latter gain the advantage in these hand-to-horn combats, and in such cases the evil resulting is very great. Sometimes the men are dreadfully lacerated, either by the horns or the sharp hoofs of their antagonists, frequently losing their lives in consequence, from want of proper medical treatment at the time the wounds are inflicted. The most common phase the disease assumes is that of tetanus or lock-jaw, which sometimes ensues from only a slight scratch on the tendinous part of the foot. From the scarcity of surgeons in the country, and the lack of skill in dressing these wounds, mortification, aneurisms, malignant abscesses, and a variety of other

complaints are amongst the evils resulting from this otherwise entertaining sport. In spite of all our precautions, and the assistance of the surgeon, Dr. Gallegos, we lost three of our best men, and several others afterward died in consequence of injuries received during that expedition.

CHAPTER XV.

PLANTS AND SNAKES.

The wide extent of the savannas composing this cattle farm, and the dispersion of the herds throughout them, compelled us to remove our quarters to a more central point, from whence we could sally forth in their pursuit. Orders were issued accordingly for the men to be in readiness, and the next morning we quitted with regret our comfortable quarters at the majordomo's mansion and started for Mata-Gorda, one of those delightful primeval groves which dot the prairies here and there.

Some idea of the extent of this huge farm may be gathered from the fact that one may start at a gallop early in the morning from one end of the savannas and not reach the other until late at night of the same day. Its area would measure at least eighty square leagues, or about one hundred and fifty thousand acres of the richest land, but which under the present backward and revolutionary state of the country is comparatively valueless to its owner. The number of

cattle dispersed throughout the length and breadth of this wide extent of prairie land was computed to be about a hundred thousand heads, and, at one time, ten thousand horses; but what with the *peste*, revolutionary exactions, and skin hunters, comparatively very few of the former and none of the latter have been left.

Our first occupation on arriving at the Mata was to set up a hasty ranch for the protection of our accoutrements and baggage, a structure which required little labor or expense, the graceful palms affording the best kind of thatch for the roof, and the surrounding woods sufficient posts and rafters for the framework. A convenient apartment was provided in it for the hammocks of our Leader and worthy Surgeon, while the rest of us were compelled to seek accommodations among the trunks and branches of the trees.

These arrangements completed, the necessary timber was next cut for the corrals to be erected for enclosing the coming herds, a work to which the hunters devoted themselves, while I found greater attractions in my daily explorations through the tangled forest. The beautiful palms there claimed my most particular attention. Apart from the splendor of their growth and other peculiarities to which I have already alluded in a former chapter, they are sufficient in themselves to supply many of the domestic and economic wants of man in a primitive state.

I also observed here many useful species of the extensive family of leguminous plants, such as the *cañafistula*, (Cathartocarpus,) of which there were several varieties, all of them beautiful timber trees,

whose pods, two feet long, were filled with a black gummy substance possessing very medicinal properties. In a natural form it affords one of the mildest and most agreeable cathartics. Belonging to the same family, the *caro*, *masaguaro*, and *saman* acacias can scarcely be rivalled in durability by any other production of the vegetable world. Their pods also contain a large proportion of a similar gummy substance which cattle devour greedily, and which fattens them better than any other kind of fodder.

The *malagueta* pepper, or donkey-bean, (*Uvaria febrifuga*,) an excellent febrifuge and antispasmodic, also grows here in the greatest abundance. Its aromatic seeds are carefully preserved in the tobacco bladder of every Llanero, along with the tubers of the snake root, (*Aristolochia bulbosa*,) a plant possessing the same virtues, and withal the best antidote against the bite of serpents.

Several other medicinal plants, such as the stately *mora*, the wild sour-sop, and the *mapurite*, are also met with here; the last owes its name to the peculiar odor, not unlike that of the skunk, which pervades the whole plant, rendering it any thing but acceptable in the neighborhood of an encampment.

Of wild fruits there was also a fine array, and among them the most delicious of all, in my opinion, is the *manirito*, (Anona muricata,) a fruit scarcely known to horticulture, and still less to the listless inhabitant of the country where it grows in wild luxuriance; as no one there has yet thought of bringing it under cultivation. This plant, which belongs to the same family as do several of the most celebrated

fruit trees of the tropics—the various kinds of custard apples and the delicious cherimoyer—attains a height of ten feet, and at the season of maturity, actually bends to the ground beneath its sweet load. Unfortunately it all ripens at once, so that in a few days the whole crop disappears. This fruit, like its congener the sour-sop, is covered with soft prickles. The inside, a sweet and highly aromatic pulp, is filled with small seeds, which, when the fruit is eaten in large quantities, as is generally the case, are apt to produce dangerous strictures. The whole plant is exceedingly fragrant; and by rubbing the leaves between the hands, they emit a delightful aroma, not unlike that of new mown hay.

Another pleasant fruit, that I here met also for the first time, was the wild *madroña*, of the size of a lemon, which it also resembles in shape and color. It is filled with a most agreeable sub-acid pulp; this envelops three or four large nuts, not unlike cacao-beans, and tastes very much like strawberries. The tree producing this delicious fruit attains a height of twenty feet. The foliage is very dense, with coriaceous leaves ten inches long, of a brilliant green. A thick yellow resin, resembling gamboge, exudes from every part of the tree when wounded; but whether it has been found useful for any particular purpose, I was unable to ascertain.

Somewhat similar to the latter, although growing upon a plant of an entirely different nature, is the *cacaita*, or monkey cacao-bean, a soft and rather insipid fruit, the production of a vine, which monkeys devour greedily.

By far the largest proportion of the trees were several species of *guamos* (Inga lucida) and others of the same order of leguminous plants, bearing pods eight or ten inches long; these are filled with a row of black beans, enveloped in a snowy white and sweetish pulp, most agreeable to the taste. The ripening season of this mild and wholesome fruit was just commencing, and every day we gathered and consumed quantities of it.

Another pod-bearing tree of great utility proper to that region is the *algarrobo*, (Hymenea curbaril,) the locust tree of the New World, which bears a thick ligneous pod containing several hard, brown, and rounded beans. These are surrounded by a sweet farinaceous substance, possessing great alimentary properties. A fragrant resin exudes from the pericarp of the pods, which, on being burned, yields a perfume similar to the odor of frankincense combined with that of balsam of Tolú.

I had almost forgotten to mention, among the agreeable fruits of these parts, several kinds of wild guavas, from the tiny Arrayan, scarcely distinguishable among the tufts of grass by which it is surrounded, to the beautiful *paujil* shrub, bearing in great profusion quantities of brilliant scarlet, highly perfumed and acidulous fruits. The berry of the former exactly resembles Jamaica allspice in shape; is quite sweet, and possesses in a high degree the exquisite flavor and aroma of the myrtle tribe, to which indeed all these plants belong.

Great care was necessary in selecting spits for roasting the beef, on account of a most poisonous

shrub, the deadly *guachamacá*, abounding there. It belongs to the extensive family of Apocineæ or Dog-banes, whose poisonous qualities are known all over the world. So virulent is this poison, that meat roasted on spits made from the guachamacá, absorbs sufficient poison to destroy all who partake of it. The lazy Indians make use of it to kill without trouble the cranes and herons on the borders of lagoons. For this they procure a number of sardines, besmear them with the juice of the plant, and spread them along the places frequented by those birds. The moment one of them seizes the fish, and before it is fairly swallowed, the bird drops dead; then the indolent hunter, issuing from his hiding-place, cuts off the parts affected by the poison, usually the head and neck, and feels no scruple in eating the remainder.

A dreadful case of poisoning by means of this plant had just occurred at Nutrias, soon after our arrival on the Apure, which created for a time great excitement even amidst that scattered population. A woman who lived with a man in the vicinity of that town became jealous of the attentions he bestowed upon a charming neighbor of theirs, and determined to avenge herself, but in some manner that would not excite suspicion. In those remote regions where coroners and chemists are unknown, it is impossible to detect murder except where marks of external violence are visible. Accordingly, she prepared for her lover a bowl of *masato*, a favorite beverage of the country, made of Indian corn boiled, mashed in water, and fermented; in this she soaked chips of the poisonous plant and offered it to him with smiling grace.

Delighted at sight of the tempting bowl, the unsuspecting lover invited several of his neighbors—among them the hated rival—to share it with him. The woman, not intending to destroy any but her perfidious lover, during his absence prepared another bowl, omitting this time the poison. Llanero politeness obliged the host, however, to mix his portion with the others, which having done, he invited the company to dip their calabash cups into the bowl. Out of eleven persons there assembled, among them several children, not one escaped except the wicked perpetrator of this wholesale murder; nor even the donkeys and fowl of the household, as their attentive master had thrown them the remains of the deadly mixture.

Such is the dread in which the Llaneros hold this plant, that I was not even permitted to preserve the specimens of fruit and flowers I had collected, with the object of ascertaining, on my return to the Valleys, the botanical characters of the species. They almost threatened to desert, if I insisted upon carrying the leaves among the baggage.

The propagation of this plant throughout the Apure appears to be of recent origin, none of the oldest inhabitants recollecting to have met with it until within comparatively a short period.

The men had no small trouble in clearing our camp of many noxious reptiles; and it became our regular afternoon business to hunt for snakes. We succeeded in killing a great number in the vicinity of the ranch, some very poisonous, while others were

quite harmless; of the latter class I found two species of coral snakes, against which an unjust prejudice exists, that they are among the most poisonous. Of the former, the *matacaballo* is the most to be feared. Although scarcely larger than a good-sized earthworm, his bite is nevertheless almost instantaneously fatal to man and beast. Unlike his other sluggish and torpid congeners, this little snake is the more dangerous because always on the alert. The tramp of a horse, especially, never fails in rousing them, against which noble animal they evince an inveterate rancor. I was once occupied in sketching one of these snakes, which I had permitted to live for the purpose, and I observed that whenever a horse approached us, the snake rapidly turned his head in the direction of the sound, seeming as if anxious to strike the animal with his fangs; but as I had fortunately taken the precaution of disabling him by partially breaking his spine, he could make but little progress toward the object of his dislike.

The tendinous part between the hoof and ankle-joint of the horse being nearest the ground, is consequently most exposed to the bite of the *matacaballo;* and although the distance from the ankle to the heart is very great, it not unfrequently happens that the animal drops as if touched by the electric spark, from which fact I infer that this poison acts on the nervous system as well as on the blood. Horned cattle and pigs are fortunately shielded by the thickness of their skin from the fangs of this destroyer, which cannot penetrate it. Hence this snake has been termed, *par excellence*, matacaballo, literally horse-killer.

It was at one time extremely dangerous to drive horses across the banks of these savannas where snakes are always most abundant; their numbers, however, have been considerably diminished since the immense multiplication of pigs in those regions.

Horses have there also another dangerous enemy—a great hairy spider or species of the tarantula; this inflicts a very poisonous and painful sting just above the hoof, which in time drops off, although it is never followed by death.

But among all these evil creatures, there is none so disgusting or so dangerous as the rattlesnake. The virulence of its poison, and the great size attained by some, renders them the terror of every man and beast where they abound. Fortunately for mankind, they have been provided by an ever-watchful Providence with what is termed a rattle; this is composed of a number of horny rings placed at the end of the tail,

which, on being shaken, produce a peculiar sound, and serve as warning. It is said that Nature every year adds one of these rings, thus marking the age of the reptile. From its loathsome body is exhaled a strong odor, somewhat resembling musk, in itself sufficient to warn the most careless, as it is perceptible at the distance of a hundred feet. The head is peculiarly flat and broad, and the eyes sparkle in the darkness like specks of fire. The mouth is a ghastly aperture, whence issues a black and forked tongue, which the reptile moves incessantly when irritated. Two long fangs, curved inwardly, project in front of the upper jaw, and through them the fatal venom is discharged. The poison is secreted from two glands in the form of small bags at the root of the fangs, admirably adapted for the purpose, being hollow inside throughout their whole length, and by their pressure against the glands produced by the act of biting, the liquid is ejected into the wound. Fortunately, this snake is the slowest in its motions, and the most torpid of its kind, otherwise the mischief done by them would be much greater, they being very abundant also in the Llanos. Their favorite haunts are the hollow trunks of decayed trees and deep fissures in the ground. Occasionally they are found coiled among thick clumps of grass, which shelter them from the glaring sun; but they are always ready to strike any intruder. At night they issue forth in quest of game, returning again to their hiding-places before sunrise.

In addition to the foregoing, there are several other kinds in the Apure; among the harmless ones

the *sabanera* is very abundant in the savannas, from which it is named. Some of these are ten feet long, and occasionally even more. They glide over the ground with astonishing rapidity, making all varieties of contortions with their bodies, the forward part of which they keep all the while raised in a vertical position. These snakes are very useful, as they destroy all the poisonous kinds they encounter.

The beautiful coral snake, with alternate rings of red, black, and white, is occasionally seen in the vicinity of ant-holes. Most persons attribute to it very poisonous qualities; but I have examined its mouth carefully and found there no fangs, nor any of the characteristics of poisonous snakes.

In the same category is placed another inoffensive reptile, a cecilia, emphatically styled *culebra de dos cabezas*, or two-headed snake—so named on account of having both ends of its body of equal thickness, while the eyes are almost invisible. It seems the connecting link between snakes and earthworms, partaking of the nature of both, is about a foot long, and rather disproportionately thick for its length, while its body is covered with minute scales. As this snake has the power of moving backward or forward with equal facility, it is supposed by many to be actually possessed of two heads. There is abundant nourishment for it in the ant nests which it frequents, but it feeds also on earthworms, and the larvæ of insects, pursuing them with unrelenting perseverance through the ground. The double motion of this reptile, its great muscular powers and flexibility enable it to penetrate the deepest recesses of a colony of ants, and to pierce the earth with wonderful expedition in search of prey.

ANTIDOTES.

Several antidotes are recommended for the venomous bite of snakes; some of them possess real alexipharmic virtues, as the *raiz de mato*, to which I have already alluded under the name of Aristolochia bulbosa, and the *guaco*, (Mikania Guaco,) a composite plant which the learned Mutis has rendered so celebrated through the instrumentality of Humboldt; the others, however, are nothing more than superstitious imaginings, which see in the tooth of a crocodile extracted on Good Friday, or in some unmeaning

orison whispered in the sufferer's ear, greater powers than in all the resources of medical science. Yet such is the leaning of the benighted children of Nature in these regions toward the supernatural, that they always give the preference to whatever savors most of the miraculous. Somewhat of this has doubtless arisen from the mistaken idea that all snakes are poisonous. Thus if it so happen that the incantation is whispered over a person who recovers, having been bitten by a harmless snake, his cure is of course attributed to magic, which is accordingly proclaimed a sovereign remedy for all similar cases in future. Saint Paul, as I have already mentioned, possesses not only the power of arresting the fatal spring of a snake, if invoked in time, but can also neutralize the poison, even when it is circulating through the veins. Notwithstanding my want of faith in the intervention of the saint in question, I confess myself to have been on an occasion extremely puzzled by one of these cherished superstitions, the famous *Oracion de San Pablo*, and up to this period have not been able to account for it in a manner satisfactory to my common sense. As we were one afternoon driving home a herd of cattle, the majordomo's horse was bitten by a *matacaballo*, when at a short distance from the ranch. The rider observed his sudden start, and at once mentioned the cause thereof. The ground, overgrown with grass, was diligently searched, and the snake discovered and killed on the very spot pointed out by the majordomo, who in the mean time had hastened forward with his horse to the ranch, knowing that the strength of the poor animal would soon give way.

Scarcely had he alighted when his horse, covered with a cold sweat, dropped to the ground. A *curandero* or snake doctor immediately presented himself and commenced a series of incantations over the prostrate animal, which it was supposed would soon counteract the poison. I was anxious to administer spirits of hartshorn, a well-authenticated remedy for such cases, but the Llaneros opposed this resolutely, on the ground that it would interfere with their own. The *Oracion* was accordingly whispered in the horse's ear and the patient then removed to a convenient pasture, where he could find abundant feed if fate ever restored his appetite. Here he was left, rolling upon the ground and moaning piteously, while I was positively assured by the men that in the course of two hours, at most, he would be completely restored, and my scepticism confounded. Singularly enough, the remedy acted in this case like a real charm; at the appointed time the horse started to his feet and commenced browsing the grass around him with as much gusto as if he had experienced no ailment whatsoever. Whether the venom of the snake was not, in this instance, strong enough to kill the horse; or, what is more probable, the reptile's fang might not have penetrated deep enough, are questions which cannot be decided, but shortly afterward the same horse, a beautiful but wild and vicious young stallion, came very near kicking to death the *curandero* who restored him to health.

The Llaneros are not, however, the only people in the country who have faith in these miraculous cures. It is more or less entertained throughout the country

by persons more enlightened in other respects than they. It is asserted of a famous *curandero* in the Valleys of Aragua, that in extreme cases, if prevented from going in person to the patient, it was only necessary to send his hat! By placing this talisman on the injured man's head, it would not only afford immediate relief, but arrest the progress of the venom until the owner could come himself to perfect the cure.

Another singular practice obtains among Llaneros; it is that of inoculation with the juice of certain plants possessing alexipharmic virtues, after which the most poisonous snakes may be handled with impunity. It is asserted, moreover, that *cerrados*—as individuals thus inoculated are termed—are not only proof against the bite of these reptiles, but can attract them around their persons by merely clapping of hands or whistling for them in fields where they abound. Having never witnessed any of these experiments, I will neither undertake to uphold the truth of this assertion, nor will I question its veracity; but there are hundreds of reliable persons in the country who will unhesitatingly swear to its efficacy; among them, is the testimony of Dr. Benites, a professional gentleman who has published the result of his experiments in a small book on the Materia Medica of the country. With the view of ascertaining the alleged properties of the guaco he devoted a great portion of his time while at La Victoria in experimenting with various kinds of snakes; from him I quote the following passage: "The guaco possesses in a high degree the

faculty of preserving man and animals in general from the terrible and fatal effects of the bites of serpents. This valuable secret, discovered in Bogota by the celebrated naturalist, Don Celestino Mútis, in 1788, remains still as such among some *curanderos* of our own country, who, under certain mysterious forms, and availing themselves of the fangs of serpents, puncture several slight incisions in certain parts of the body, which they fill with the powdered leaves of the guaco previously made dry, and administer the same internally mixed in common rum. This property of the guaco is so reliable, inoculation by means of the juice such as was practised by Mútis himself so well authenticated, and the facts concerning it so well attested, that there cannot longer exist the least doubt in regard to its efficacy. I wished to convince myself by actual experiment, and can testify that in a thousand trials of inoculation practised by myself in different ways on patients whom I allowed to be bitten by various kinds of snakes, I never knew one to fail. Suffice it to say that the principal amusement of children in this place is to catch, carry about and play with snakes, and that even young ladies keep them in their bosoms or coil them around their necks."

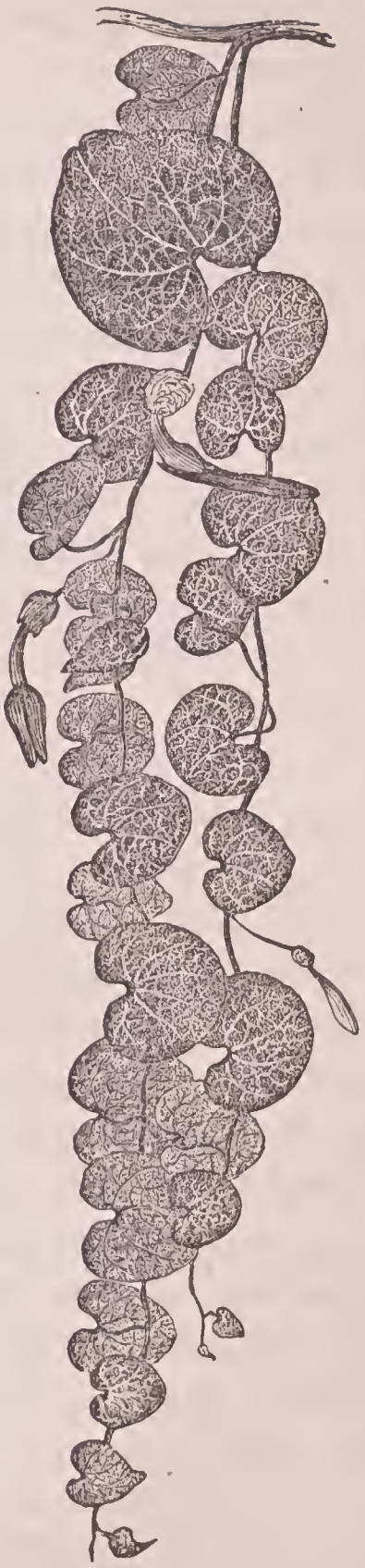
It appears, nevertheless, absolutely necessary to renew the inoculation at different epochs of a man's life, as in the case of vaccination it loses its power after a time. It was no doubt owing to his neglect of the rule, that a gentleman in the town of Ocumare some years ago fell a victim to his blind confidence in this sort of inoculation. Don N. Ugarte had kept

a rattlesnake in a drawer during four years; with it he occasionally amused himself, no more harm resulting therefrom than if it had been a kitten. One day on returning home from his rounds in the plantation, he felt in the humor of playing a little with his old pet, and accordingly took him out of his berth and placed him upon the writing desk before him. One of the children who had also been inoculated happening to be near, the father suggested that he should kiss the reptile; to this, the child objected very decidedly; the foolish parent, however, insisting, the mother interfered and begged that her child should not be compelled to touch the loathsome creature; whereupon the father exclaimed: "How foolish you are! I will show you how it kisses me. Now, then, pet, give me a kiss;" and so saying, he leaned forward toward the snake; true to its instincts, the reptile sprang to his lips and implanted such a kiss that its master never recovered from the effects. Both fangs of the snake went quite through his upper lip, and he at once felt himself to be mortally wounded. A physician was sent for without delay, but he expired before assistance could reach him.

The guaco is employed, moreover, in various other disorders of the system with great success. In chronic rheumatism it is an invaluable remedy both in the form of poultices made of the fresh leaves, or by simply rubbing the part affected with a decoction of the plant in spirits, and taking internally one or two ounces of the expressed juice, morning and evening. Administered in the latter form it is an efficacious remedy against hydrophobia, if given immediately

after the person has been bitten by a mad dog. General Paez was thus saved, when a youth, from this dreadful scourge of tropical countries; he has nevertheless retained in after life some evil effects of the virus still in his system, manifesting itself in a tendency to severe spasmodic affections, especially at sight of a snake, which invariably induces violent convulsions.

Next to the guaco in importance as an alexipharmic, may be classed the *raiz de mato*, including several varieties of Aristolochias, the roots of which are intensely bitter. As its name implies, it is said to afford the *mato*—a large species of lizard—a prompt antidote against the bite of his old antagonist, the snake. There would seem to exist some ancient grudge between these two reptiles, many persons asserting that whenever they



ARISTOLOCHIA APURENSIS.—NATURAL SIZE.

come in sight of one another, they instantly rush to the attack, the *mato* never failing to overcome his rival by his superior botanical knowledge; this, or his instinct, prompts him to seek the plant, and swallowing some of the leaves, returns recuperated to the fight.*

To the facts adduced above, I now have the pleasure of adding the testimony of such an authority as Gosse, who has devoted an entire chapter of his truly romantic book† to the consideration of a subject "well worthy of minute investigation by able and unprejudiced men of science, willing to receive unscientific information and suggestions, in various parts of the world, particularly in the intertropical regions of both hemispheres." Among the many well-authenticated incidents recorded by him, I select the following as bearing a striking similarity to the one just mentioned: "Some animals, especially those which prey upon serpents, seem to be proof against their bites. The ichneumons, or mangoustes of Africa and Asia, have long been celebrated for their immunity, and veritable stories have been narrated of their having recourse to some herb, when bitten, after which they successfully renewed the attack. Percival, in his account of Cey-

* Dr. Lindley, speaking of the properties of Aristolochias in general, and more especially of A. serpentaria—a North American species—observes: "As its name implies, it is used as an antidote to serpent bites, a quality in which several other species participate, among which may be mentioned A. trilobata, a Jamaica plant, also employed as a sudden and powerful sudorific; and the Cartagena A unguicida, concerning which Jaquin writes, that the juice of the root, chewed and introduced into the mouth of a serpent, so stupefies it that it may for a long time be handled with impunity; if the reptile is compelled to swallow a few drops, it perishes in convulsions."—*Vegetable Kingdom.*

† The Romance of Natural History—Second Series, chap. ix.

lon, relates that a mangouste placed in a close room where a venomous serpent was, instead of darting at it, as he would ordinarily have done, ran peeping about, anxiously seeking some way of escape; but finding none, it returned to its master, crept into his bosom, and could by no means be persuaded to face the snake. When, however, both were removed out of the house into the open field, the maugouste instantly flew at the serpent, and soon destroyed it. After the combat the little quadruped suddenly disappeared for a few minutes, and again returned. Percival concludes, not unreasonably, that during its absence it had found the antidotal herb, and eaten of it. The natives state that the maugouste resorts on such occasions to the *Ophiorhiza mungos*, whose root is reputed a specific for serpent-bites. This is a cinchonaceous plant, so intensely bitter that it is called by the Malays by a name which signifies earth-gall."

How wonderful the provisions of bountiful Nature are; and still more singular the readiness of the human intellect, whether in a rude or a cultivated state, to make them subservient to its wants! The most extraordinary antidote against the bite of serpents yet within my knowledge, is the one employed on the coast of Cartagena, not the "earth-gall," which they possess of the bitterest kind in Aristolochia unguicida, but the gall of the reptile itself, an alcoholic solution of which, administered to the patient in small doses, rubbing the wound with the same, or with spirits of ammonia, being sufficient to counteract the virus of the most deadly serpents of that region.

CHAPTER XVI.

TIGER STORIES.

On the second night from our arrival at the Mata, just as most of our party in their hammocks were swinging off into dreamland, the ominous cry of *El Tigre!*—the tiger—was heard in the direction of the camp fires, where a few of the men still lingered. As if lifted by a gust of the pampero, every man dropped from his aërial couch, and in an instant the whole camp became a scene of the wildest confusion. Firebrands flew in every direction, by the uncertain glare of which we gained occasional glimpses of the jaguar, for such was the intruder, prowling near us like a huge cat. The horses snorted in terror, the men shouted vociferously, while our brave Mónico commenced drumming upon his pots and kettles as if they were so many gongs, with which in his capacity of cook he summoned us to dinner, creating such an uproar as drowned the voices of men and beasts, and was horrible enough to frighten away a legion of jaguars. The odor of the savory spits, at all hours faithful to their posts around the camp fires, had

THE JAGUAR.

doubtless proved the magnet of attraction to his spotted majesty, who, probably disgusted with the style of his reception, made a precipitate retreat to his stronghold in the forest, growling indignation at our want of hospitality.

Although among the natives he is commonly known by the name of the tiger, this animal is actually the jaguar or Felix Onza of naturalists, no real tigers existing in any part of America. It nevertheless exerts the same tyranny over other animals as does the tiger or leopard in the hot regions of the Old World, differing from its congener principally in the form of the marks upon his skin, which in the jaguar of America are rounded or in rings, therein unlike the long stripes of the Bengal tiger. In another species common to the forests of Guayana, the skin is nearly black, the spots being invisible except in the broad sunlight. This is considered the most sanguinary and ferocious. Some jaguars attain a great size, measuring seven feet from the nose to the tail. They are sufficiently powerful to kill an ox or horse and drag them off over the highest fences.

When the excitement occasioned by the intrusion of the nocturnal thief had subsided, few of us were inclined for sleep ; several of our men, therefore, who had been at different times active participators in similar adventures, volunteered entertaining us for the remainder of the night with some interesting stories concerning this lord of South American forests. From them I gathered many useful facts respecting his habits and disposition, which I shall recount as nearly as possible verbatim.

Although, perhaps, the most powerful among wild beasts of this continent, the jaguar is by no means as terrible as might be supposed from the renown of his prowess. Occasionally when hard pressed by hunger he ventures within the precincts of man, robbing the corrals of the farmhouse of their defenceless inmates. Many instances are also related of his having attacked and carried off a solitary traveller to his lair in the woods; but he usually evinces the profoundest respect for man unless driven to extremities, when he has been known to set at defiance the combined efforts of a host of men and dogs. When thus, by a too intimate acquaintance with the people and flocks of some particular community, he has gone so far as to levy blackmail upon them, the appellation of *cebado*—as in the case of the crocodile—is given to the jaguar. An animal of this description is said to possess wonderful daring and instinct, making him by far the most dangerous of the class, attacking not only tame animals in the corrals, but even individuals are frequently assailed and devoured by him. It is said also that when he has once tasted human blood, he becomes insatiable in his eagerness to procure this luxury. They are then so dangerous, that the owners of cattle farms usually call a meeting of all the *hateros* in the vicinity, capable of handling lazo or lance—firearms being rarely used in expeditions of this kind—and with the assistance of a pack of well-trained hounds of a peculiar breed, called *tigreros* in consequence, they surround the wood supposed to harbor the tiger, and beating carefully about the jungle, drive him out into the open plain, where men on horseback are stationed ready to

lazo the game as it breaks cover. To ensure success, it is only requisite that the horses be steady and well trained to the sport; and as the tiger, conscious of his danger, frequently refuses to quit the jungle, a number of daring matadors are also needed to drive him out or attack him in his lair, assisted in this by the dogs, which, by harassing him on all sides, divert him from the assailants.

Jaguars were at one time so numerous in the Llanos, that their ravages upon the calves and young foals were truly frightful. This circumstance, in addition to the value attached in other countries to their beautiful skins, have contributed to reduce the numbers very considerably, as whenever they make their appearance they are eagerly pursued.

In its wild state the jaguar is an exceedingly beautiful animal; his motions particularly easy and graceful, and possessing wonderful agility in bounding among the trees and tall grass of the savannas. When watching for prey, he generally crouches upon the ground, the fore paws stretched out, resting his head between them in a manner very similar to that of the domestic cat; and as he climbs trees with a facility almost equal to that of monkeys, these are in exceeding dread of him on that account.

The haunts usually preferred by the jaguar appear to be swampy borders of marshes and lagoons overgrown with reeds and wild plantain, where they are sure of finding plenty of game. Water hogs or capyvaras especially, are easy prey, as they cannot move except in short jumps. It is asserted that where these animals abound, there is little to be feared from the

jaguar, which always prefers the wild animals of the field for food, becoming bolder and more dangerous to man in proportion as these disappear.

My earliest recollection of the jaguar dates from the time when the famous town of Achaguas was head-quarters for the patriot army commanded by my father. I was a little fellow not more than three years of age, when a foraging party fell in with a tigress and her cub; the latter they secured and brought to Achaguas after a desperate struggle with the mother. The extreme beauty and youth of the captive soon gained the sympathies and favor of a host of admirers, especially those of the female department, in the household of Colonel Mujica, who purchased it and consigned it to their care. Under their special protection and good treatment it quickly grew strong enough to take part in all squabbles among the dogs and cats of the family, which animals always form a prominent feature in all well-regulated Llanero establishments. At first the new pet was allowed the entire freedom of the premises, associating very readily with every stranger who visited the house, and evincing none of the disagreeable traits ascribed to these animals. I, who participated in all its juvenile antics, and who supposed it to be only a large cat, very soon became its favorite playmate, until on one occasion it carried its pranks so far as to throw me down, at the same time tearing my clothing to rags with its claws. From this moment it was considered expedient to chain up my playfellow, and accordingly he was secured to a pillar

in the corridor of the house. It is related of this favorite, that having afterward broken its chain, it speedily found the way to the poultry yard where the Colonel kept his game chickens, not one of which was left to fight its battles over. For this unpardonable breach of discipline the young tiger received so sound a castigation as to cripple the poor fellow for life.

Numberless are the tricks recorded of the lame tiger of Colonel Mujica, they for a time constituting the principal amusement of those of the army who were in the habit of frequenting the Colonel's quarters to while away their idle hours at the favorite game of monte. What finally became of my uncouth playfellow, I am unable to state; the probability is that he, as well as most of the brave champions of that memorable epoch, is dead; at all events, they are buried . . . . in the dust of the past.

In a solitary ranch, not far from San Jaime, there once lived a poor widow, who, out of compassion for a young cub which had been picked up by some vaqueros undertook to raise it with the milk of her own goats, sheltering it at night from the damp under the folds of her bed, covering and treating the foundling with as much affection as though it were her child. In return, the little fellow became so attached to its adopted mother, that it could not endure a moment's separation from her, and would lie like a cat by the fireside while she devoted herself to the occupations of the kitchen. As it grew older and stronger, the woman's slender stock of goats was rapidly diminished by its repeated depredations; it was therefore

deemed prudent to give it wider range than the widow's little farm-yard, and it was encouraged to seek for game in the neighboring woods. Whenever successful in these excursions, the intelligent creature invariably brought some home, and with seeming pride laid it at the feet of its benefactress. On one occasion, some of her neighbors having come to pass the day with her, she thought that as game was plentiful and easily obtained, she would spare such of her goats as had thus far escaped the teeth of her favorite, and, instead, procure with its assistance a supply of venison with which to treat her guests. Accordingly, leaving the hut in their charge, she and her efficient hunter started for the woods, proposing to be back in time to cook the dinner; but to the astonishment of her visitors, the dinner-hour arrived, then the night, but no tidings of the hunters; and up to this time, I believe, nothing has been heard about either of the former tenants of the solitary ranch, although it is not difficult to imagine the poor widow's fate.

We had once in our employ a stout and powerful sambo, who on account of his name—Bolivar—and his great muscular development, had received the sobriquet of Bolivote, or big Bolivar. Great was his pride in possessing not only the same patronymic as the distinguished General of his name, but also some deep scars on his right arm, inflicted by the claws of a jaguar, which he improved every opportunity of displaying.

Bolivote had been riding hard during a whole day, and feeling rather weary, sought repose under

the shade of a clump of palm trees, allowing his horse meanwhile to crop the grass near by. He had lain down at the foot of a palm, and almost fallen asleep, when he was roused by a rustling of the leaves overhead, and looking up to ascertain the cause, beheld with astonishment a large jaguar in the act of springing upon him. He started to his feet, but was within the tiger's grasp ere he could unsheath his sword. Without losing a moment he plunged his finger into one of the fiery eyeballs glaring upon him, and succeeded in forcing it from its socket. The pain thus inflicted was so acute, that the tiger retreated with fearful yells; yet not before he had mangled with teeth and claws the sturdy arm which had punished him so severely.

During our journey across the pampas, we were shown the spot where not long before a jaguar had attacked a woman. Her preservation, also, was due to presence of mind, and to the fact of being armed with a *machete* or cutlass, with which she had intended cutting a load of wood for domestic uses. The wood being near at hand, she was in the daily habit of fearlessly traversing the plain alone. On one occasion she went *al monte*, to the fields, as they say there, with the intention of collecting her usual load of fagots. No sooner did she commence breaking the sticks, than a deep rumbling growl which seemed to shake the ground beneath her feet, almost paralyzed her movements. Although the sound was somewhat familiar, yet she never before had heard it so near at hand, and she was therefore instantly con-

scious of her perilous situation. Knowing that an attempt at precipitate flight would only contribute to increase the anger of the tiger, she decided accordingly upon concealing herself and remaining perfectly quiet behind a large tree. Vain endeavor! in a few moments a large jaguar glided from the tangled jungle and stood before the terrified woman, his eyes shooting fire, his open mouth parched with thirst of blood. At the dread sight she gave herself up for lost, and began reciting aloud a prayer to her patron saint, which the tiger answered with another fearful roar. The jaguar then commenced tearing up the roots of the nearest tree, looking the while like a huge cat sharpening his claws. Then gradually approaching the woman's hiding-place until within a few yards, with a bound he cleared the space separating them, and alighted at the foot of the tree behind which she was sheltered. Without a moment's loss, the woman aimed a blow with her *machete*, severing one of the paws which grasped the tree. This partly disabling him, he retreated a few paces; but soon returning to the attack, received a second blow, this time on his head, with such good effect that he fell stunned upon the ground. It is needless to add that our heroine did not wait to see what might have been the final result of this blow, but springing from her hiding-place, she so belabored him with her *machete* as to completely spoil his skin for marketable purposes.

Among the troop of idlers and adventurers always following the camp, we were favored at Mata Gorda with the company of a famous story teller of the

Apure, who, in wonderful encounters with wild beasts, and marvellous adventures, might almost rival the celebrated Baron Munchausen, or even the sailor of Arabian Nights celebrity. His real name was B.; but owing to his diminutive stature and cunning, he had been honored with the familiar appellation of *Tio Conejo*.* Indeed, so small was he, that if we credit his statement, he was often mistaken for his own baby, usurping its place in the cradle for the purpose of enjoying the kisses and other *petites caresses* usually lavished by the female sex upon these tender innocents. Among the various incidents of his eventful life, he had, as a matter of course, something to say concerning tigers.

"Once upon a time," said our humorous companion, "I was by the banks of the river Uribante, and there had an opportunity of cheating *Tio Tigre* in his endeavors to make mince meat of my humble self. Returning one day from a successful fishing excursion, I was enjoying my usual siesta when *El Tio* made up his mind, as it seemed, to pay me an unexpected visit, doubtless with the intention of robbing me of the products of my industry, which I had dressed and salted a few minutes before. Happily I have for obvious reasons accustomed my eyes to keep alternate watch when camping out alone, as was the case in this instance, so that if approached by any evil-disposed individual, I am always able to avoid

* *Tio Tigre* and *Tio Conejo*—Uncle Tiger and Uncle Rabbit. These are the heroes of endless adventures, the mother's never-failing source of amusement to her children, supposed to have taken place in the woods of Venezuela.

danger through the watchfulness of the one on duty; when this sentinel becomes weary, I allow it to sleep and rouse its fellow.

"Well, *Señores*, as I have said already, one of my watchmen observing the tiger coming toward me, I sprang from my hammock with the intention of giving him a warm reception; but, luckily for the spotted vagabond, my *cuchillo*, which is always by my side, was left forgotten among the heap of fish I had been dressing. Thus cut off from my only means of defence, and observing near by an immense gourd of a size such as is rarely seen in these parts, I slipped into it just when *Tio Tigre* thought he had me."

The narrative was here interrupted by a sceptical individual from the audience insisting upon being enlightened as to the precise dimensions of that gourd; the reply was, "Why, Sirs, here is nothing extraordinary. I have seen squashes at the foot of the Cordilleras, each of which would be a load sufficient for a bongo. I once lost a pack of mules during the night, and after searching for them around the base of what I supposed a hillock, I found the sagacious animals inside one of these squashes—for such was the seeming hillock—supping at leisure on the succulent pulp, having gnawed for themselves a passage to the interior. But to return to my story. The tiger, enraged at my sudden disappearance, commenced a deliberate attack with teeth and claws upon the tough and slippery shell, with no other result than that of rolling the gourd with me in it further from him.

"It was hugely amusing to watch from my stronghold the tactics of my assailant; at one moment

THE PUMA.

crouched a short distance off upon the ground, he would watch the mysterious object much as a cat watches a mouse; then with a sudden spring pounced again upon the gourd, thus causing it to roll before him like a ball. My only fear was, that the tiger in one of these furious onsets might precipitate me into the stream below. I was not then aware that water in deep rivers reaches no lower than the base of their steep banks, which act as support for the whole body of water above, thus leaving a clear expanse underneath and the bed of the river entirely dry, a remarkable fact which I discovered on another occasion when diving in the Orinoco for a lost treasure belonging to the monks.

"That which I feared at last came to pass. The gourd, pushed by the tiger, fell spinning into the water, and I found myself sailing down the stream escorted by a band of hungry crocodiles, who watched me with eager eyes and open jaws, until my patron saint in the form of a humane porpoise came to my assistance, frightened off the ugly wretches, and receiving me on his back, landed me in safety on a desert shore, where, *amigos*, you will have to leave me for the present, as it is almost morning, and we must sleep an hour or two before starting for the *Rodeo*."

THE PANTHER-TIGER.

Although principally a sojourner in the more elevated parts of the country, the panther is occasionally seen descending toward the plains in search of

the abundant fare of the pampas. He resembles the jaguar in many respects, and is called in consequence, *tigre de serrania*, or mountain tiger. He is, however, easily distinguished from the former by the shape of his head, which in the panther is more acute toward the snout, while the spots on his skin are smaller and more closely set.

The panther is by far the bolder and more sanguinary of the two; he frequents the mountain passes, waylaying stray animals and solitary travellers; and there are many cases on record in which he has displayed his bloodthirsty propensities by boldly seeking food even in the very haunts of man.

Some of the mountain districts of Venezuela are so infested with them, that few travellers ever venture to journey alone there; as, for instance, the *montaña de* Capaya, east of Caracas, and the Cerro de Aroa to the west, both famed for the number and boldness of these animals. Under cover of the dense forests with which those mountains are clothed to the very summit, they lie in wait. Not long since, a traveller from the village of Aroa, finding the distance greater than he had anticipated, was compelled to pass the night in the forest. Fearing the panthers, he slung his hammock between two palm trees as high as possible from the ground, hoping doubtless thereby to escape them, but his precautions proved of no avail; the poor traveller fell a prey to one of these sanguinary beasts. A few days after, a party of muleteers passing along the same route, found on the spot where the sad tragedy had been enacted, evidence of the bloody assault. Deep furrows

ploughed in the ground between the palm trees, showed that the panther must have made frequent and tremendous leaps to reach the unfortunate traveller; but with the exception of the torn hammock, there remained no vestige of the victim.

My first vacation trip from the terrors of a South American school and the angry visage of a harsh preceptor, is still fresh in my mind, as is also the fright I received upon the road from an imaginary panther while endeavoring to reach before daylight the nearest inn upon the route.

The road from the capital to the Valleys of Aragua—our destination—lies for the most part over a high ridge of mountains with precipitous sides, interspersed here and there with deep ravines and almost impenetrable thickets of forest trees, fit lurking-places for wild beasts and banditti. The extreme steepness of the road renders the aid of mules, or horses of superior mettle, imperative, and for this exigency our attentive guides had well provided before leaving Caracas.

The party was principally composed of young gentlemen and their attendants, all like myself bound to the fertile regions of Aragua, where we purposed passing the holidays with our families; and a wilder set of madcaps it would have been difficult to find. Every moment witnessed a malicious trick, sometimes tickling the mules under the cruppers with whips, until, worried into frenzy, they plunged fearfully along the road, placing us in danger of being hurled into eternity through the yawning chasms be-

neath. Sometimes jerking the tail of a neighbor's mule, causing the animal to whirl so violently as to almost destroy its balance. Occasionally some of the party might be seen scrambling up the rugged side of a mountain after bright colored insects or wild berries. At length, the steepness of the ascent no longer permitting the continuance of our pranks, the guides entertained us with frightful stories of a tiger said to lurk in these mountains; but chiefly with accounts of horrid murders perpetrated at various points along our route, which, judging from the many crosses and stone mounds raised to the victims by the piety of wayfarers, must have been truly appalling in number. In those parts it is customary to mark the spot where a crime of the kind has been committed, with a wooden cross, at whose foot every passer-by casts a stone, muttering at the same time a prayer for the repose of the unshriven soul. One of these memorials was erected to a poor fellow, whose throat had been cut and body frightfully mutilated for a new poncho and a few reals. At another, a tiger had seized a wearied poultry carrier imprudently asleep by the side of his coop, and devoured him and his chickens. In another instance, the tiger appeared suddenly among a group of muleteers quietly refreshing themselves by the murmuring waters of a mountain stream, and after scattering the affrighted group, helped himself to their repast.

These stories, told with great vivacity and much embellishment, excited in a high degree the fervid imaginations of the youthful cavalcade, causing them as night approached to keep close together. They, however, did not deter me, who had ever a peculiar

fondness for the beautiful in nature, from loitering somewhat in the rear of my companion to gaze in wondering admiration upon the grandeur and wild luxuriance of the scene which on all sides met my eyes. Absorbed in contemplation I was riding slowly along, when suddenly, and to my great horror and dismay, I found myself in presence of, apparently, the dreaded tiger of the mountains. My imagination, roused by the exciting stories of the muleteers, showed me the spotted brute seated upon his haunches, his sinister eyes gazing steadily at me over his right shoulder. Notwithstanding this pacific attitude, a thrill of terror chilled my veins, while in spite of the cold prevailing on those mountain ranges, heavy drops of perspiration streamed from my trembling body. The tiger seeming spell-bound with my sudden apparition, I endeavored to cry aloud for help; but terror had deprived me of voice. I then concluded to dismount and place the mule between myself and the tiger, which impulse was suddenly checked as I caught sight of the yawning precipice beside me. I had therefore no alternative, other than the ignominious one of sliding down in the rear of my mule, a feat I rapidly accomplished without in the least inconveniencing the patient creature, which all the while stood quietly awaiting my pleasure. At this moment the moon, until then partially obscured by the dense fog, shone brilliantly upon the scene, when, to my great mortification and greater relief, I discovered that the ferocious tiger of my imagination was only the fallen branch of a tree covered with leaves, which last my fertile fancy had mistaken for the spotted skin of the dreaded mountain tiger.

CHAPTER XVII.

SHOOTING ADVENTURES.

We were now in the very midst of the most splendid shooting ground of the republic, and each day my quest after the feathered inhabitants of those fine groves was rewarded with an abundant supply of *pavas*, *guacharacas*, and that most noble and beautiful of all game birds, the *pauji* or crested curassow of South America, (Crax alector.) This fine species is found in all parts of the country, especially in the woods of the *tierra caliente*, where it can be tracked without difficulty by the shrill and prolonged whistle with which it calls its mate, and which can be heard from a long distance. It appears not to notice the presence of the hunter, allowing itself to be shot down without making the least effort to avoid the danger. This bird is nearly the same size as the domestic turkey, and being easily domesticated, could very well supply the place of that fowl, as the flesh is juicy and of exquisite flavor. Its plumage is peculiarly rich and beautiful, the head and neck being white and the rest of its body of a rich olive brown, excepting the wing tips which are black. An elegant

tuft of curled, glossy black feathers surmounts the head, adding greatly to the splendor of its appearance. In the more elevated parts of the country there is another species, the *paujī de piedra* or cashew-bird, so called from a singular excrescence on the top of its head, in color a bluish gray, and bearing some resemblance to a polished nodule of slate. This bird only inhabits woods growing at about four thousand feet of elevation, and if possible exceeds in beauty the preceding. Its plumage of a deep black, with tints of olive green, contrasts exquisitely with that of the bill and legs, which are respectively of a brilliant scarlet and deep yellow. They are even more easily domesticated than the preceding, and are therefore to be met with in many a farm yard of the Cordillera, where they form one of its most graceful ornaments.

The *guacharaca* or South American pheasant may also be classed among the finest game birds of Venezuela, and is extremely abundant everywhere. In riding along the solitary roads through the plains and fertile vales of the *tierra caliente*, the traveller may have often noticed at all hours of the day and even of the night, more especially at the approach of rain, a most discordant chattering in harsh and shrill notes; it is the song of the *guacharaca*, a bird of about the size of the domestic hen, bearing some resemblance to the female pheasant, and like it of a chocolate color. It is of a sociable nature, always congregating in flocks of twenty or thirty. The moment one of the number leads the chant, all the rest join in chorus, uttering distinctly in hoarse repetition *guacharaca*, *guacha-*

raca; hence the name of this bird. These cries are invariably responded to by all the flocks in the neighborhood, so that in a short time the whole valley rings from end to end with their discordant voices. Like all other gallinaceous birds, it is very easily domesticated with the *paujies*, *pavas*, *gallinetas*, and several other wild fowl with which the rural inhabitant loves to stock his yard.

In addition to the foregoing, there are also in the Llanos all kinds of wild pigeons, doves, plovers, and quails, the latter so abundant that they can easily be killed by the hundred with a stick. And indeed, so great is the almost endless variety of fine birds in these wilds, that it would be impossible, within the limits of these pages, to enter into further detail concerning them.

Deer were also very plentiful, both in the *mata*, whither they were attracted by its refreshing shade, and in the meadows around it; but having no dogs with us, and being unwilling to tire our horses in unprofitable sport, we refrained from their pursuit. One afternoon, however, much to my surprise, a merry, clever fellow by the name of Casimiro, who had followed us from the valleys, entered the camp bending under the weight of a fine doe which he had killed that afternoon, together with a buck that an Indian boy was carrying for him. On our complimenting his extraordinary skill in killing two deer in so short a space of time, he informed us that he could have brought down any number of them, and intended retracing his steps at once for more. This proved no mere boast, for quickly returning to the woods, he

soon after again made his appearance with a similar load, which, seating himself by the fire, he at once commenced skinning.

I inquired of Casimiro the occasion of his success; he replied by producing a tube of bamboo about the thickness of the thumb, one end being covered with a thin membrane. On blowing through the other end, a sound precisely resembling the bleating of a young fawn resulted. It is in this manner that the treacherous hunter decoys the anxious doe, whose every motion he watches from the place of his concealment behind the branches of some tree, usually the algarrobo, of whose pods deer are very fond. This detestable expedient is, I am glad to state, rarely practised unless by hungry sportsmen; and as we were then in the midst of plenty, and venison besides not being much relished by the beef-eating population of the Llanos, we had fortunately no occasion to resort to it in any of our subsequent deer-shooting adventures.

Another device much practised by Indians in these cases, consists in assuming the guise of the great *garzon* or soldier crane of the pampas, whose company appears always welcome to deer grazing in the open prairie. This crane, which I have mentioned in a former chapter, as being at the least five feet in height, is mounted upon a pair of long slender legs, giving it the appearance of walking on stilts; their plumage is a dazzling white, and they have a pouch under the throat of a brilliant scarlet color. The bill, too, is quite a remarkable feature, fully a foot

long and very wide at the base, which permits of swallowing at a mouthful large fish, as well as frogs, toads and snakes, of which last it partakes with equal relish. All that the hunter has to do, who intends ensnaring his deer with borrowed plumes, is to hide his own face with a mask, which must have a long bill resembling that of the crane attached to it. The mask being securely fastened on, he finishes his toilet by covering his body to his knees with a white garment.

In this simple disguise the hunter, equipped besides with his gun or bow and arrows, makes straight for the game, careful however to approach it in a contrary direction to that of the wind, deer possessing peculiarly acute powers of scent. On one occasion, I was fortunate enough to shoot three of these shy animals out of a small herd, before the rest took the alarm.

Our young *attaché*, Roseliano, who had witnessed the universal success of these devices, envying the achievements of his elders, determined to try what he could accomplish for himself in this line. Accordingly, choosing for his intended victim a fine stag grazing at no great distance from the camp, he forthwith proceeded on his experiment. Having no *garzon's* beak at hand, nor even a white garment, with which to personate the feathered dandy of the savannas, he was for some time at a loss how to approach the game without alarming it, when a malicious companion persuaded him that he could ensnare the deer equally well if he presented himself simply *in puris naturalibus*, assuring him that the animal would indubitably conceive him to be a rare bird or at least a new species of *garzon*. Roseliano, finally convinced by these specious representations, quickly denuded himself; then, gun in hand, and taking all necessary precautions in regard to the wind, which was blowing quite fresh at the time, immediately gave chase.

At first the stag appeared to pay little heed to the enticing object, and allowed it to approach within range; but the moment the gun was raised, the stag turned round and trotted slowly off, waving his short tail defiantly. Sometimes he stopped for a little while, seeming to examine from head to foot this unfeathered biped, afterward resuming his mastications with perfect nonchalance. At such times Roseliano, with due precautions, would creep slowly toward him, when invariably the deer, almost within range, again trotted composedly down the plain, not even giving his pursuer a chance to aim at him. Occasionally he

would turn about, stamp his tiny hoof upon the hard ground, and again move off wagging his little tail at him as though to say, "No, you don't."

Thus went each, still eluding still pursuing, for a long distance, without either seeming at all willing to part company, until the burning sun began to tell upon the bare skin of the young hunter, who experienced besides sundry painful reminders from the thorny sensitive plants under foot. At length growing somewhat desperate, he dashed ahead and sent a random shot after the deer without success, the ball striking the ground far short of the mark. The deer seemed now to think he had received notice to quit, for, to the great disgust of poor Roseliano, he at once bounded gracefully over the tall grass and disappeared from view.

Within a stone's throw of our camp were several lagoons abounding in terrapins and turtles, whilst on all sides the savannas teemed with many delicious quadrupeds. These, on account of their *penchant* for the water, have been declared cold-blooded animals by the church, and can in consequence be eaten as fish; and as it was Holy Week, a grand hunt was proposed for the purpose of providing the camp with food which should be wholesome as well for the soul as the body. Accordingly, early on Good Friday morning the whole disposable force assembled in front of the ranch; and after a partial organization, all started on foot in different directions, some in quest of *cachicamos* or armadillos, others for *galapagos* and tortoises, while the less fastidious did not disdain to try their skill upon those water hogs, the *chigüires* or capyvaras.

The results of the hunt far exceeded our expectation, as in less than four hours nearly three hundred armadillos, and probably as many turtles, were brought into camp. The flesh of the *chigüire* is not much relished by the Llaneros, although it is excellent for hams when properly cured and smoked; accordingly the carcasses, the hind quarters being removed, were left to the turkey buzzards.

The flesh of the armadillo is most delicious, tasting very much like young pig; and being always roasted in the shell—a thick cuirass formed of successive horny plates—all its juices are effectually preserved. It is, however, very rich eating, from the excess of fatness, and therefore liable to produce indigestion, if not followed by a good dose of aguardiente and a strong sauce of Chili peppers. It is also said to exert very injurious effects on persons predisposed to syphilitic disorders of the system, developing incipient ulcers and various other cutaneous diseases.

The armadillo is a harmless, curiously-formed little quadruped, about the size of a common hedgehog; it burrows in the ground, spending the greater part of the day in cool retirement, issuing at dusk or very early in the morning in search of food; this consists principally of worms, the larvæ of insects or perchance a young snake from the broods that take shelter among the cells of its subterranean abode—whether by permission or as intruders, remains to be ascer-

tained. The fact is, however, that many of these burrows are so full of snakes, that it is necessary on account of them to exercise considerable caution when passing near the abodes of armadillos. Two little owls called *aguaita-caminos*, road-watchers, usually stand like sentinels at the entrance of these burrows, and by their constant flutterings around the sportsman, and their uncouth motions, almost invariably succeed in warning the armadillo. Nevertheless, if the hunter approach in front, he can always secure it with his hands as its vision in that direction is entirely obscured by the position of the plates with which the head is covered. When attacked from the rear or sides, it makes quickly for its burrow; but if the hunter, however, be sufficiently expert, he may succeed in getting hold of the long, horny tail of the animal before it disappears entirely from view. Even then, as this creature possesses the power of swelling its body when thus attacked, it is rather difficult to drag it out, unless by some means the size of the burrow can be enlarged. There is then danger of severe wounds from its sharp claws, as well as of being bitten by some of the poisonous snakes which share its home.

What affinity there is existing between this quadruped and the finny inhabitants of the water, prompting their classification among amphibia, I was unable to ascertain; but although the capyvara and several others placed by the church under that category, possess, it is true, great powers of resistance while in water, the reverse is assuredly the case with regard to the armadillo, which always seeks the higher

grounds so as to escape submersion during the great floods; and I have often found it in the midst of extensive plains where no moisture excepting the dews of night is to be seen for miles around.

When all the different parties, participants in the hunting excursion, were once more seated round the camp fires, it was quite amusing to hear their accounts of the various incidents connected with it; one had got hold of a rattlesnake's tail, mistaking it for that of an armadillo; another had stumbled over a crocodile while diving for turtles in a shallow creek; a third had his toe bitten off by caribes; while not a few experienced more or less severe shocks from electric eels. In front of many of the fires, soon blazing under the trees, were arrayed on long wooden spits entire carcasses of the armadillos split along the belly and kept open by means of cross bars of green boughs. Directly the coals were sufficiently hot in the centre of the fires, the galapagos were all beheaded and thrown, still alive, into the midst of the burning embers. These chelonia, like all other amphibia, are exceedingly tenacious of life; their sufferings, therefore, must doubtless be great under this lingering death, as was manifested by their long-continued struggles in the fire.

The Llaneros say that these turtles, according to their most exquisite gastronomers, should be eaten where there is no light, asserting that they will then be found more rich and juicy; but the actual reason for this, as I afterward ascertained to my great disgust, was that some of the choicest morsels are pre-

cisely those which to be eaten must not be seen, as otherwise they would unhesitatingly be rejected.

There are several varieties of fresh water tortoises in the Apure, an abundant and wholesome food for the inhabitants. The most common are the *galapagos*, a large species of terrapin, the *terecay* and the *arrau* or great turtle of the Orinoco, concerning which the celebrated Father Gumilla wrote in his "Orinoco Illustrated," that it would be as difficult to count the grains of sand on the shores of the Orinoco, as to count the immense number of tortoises which inhabit its margin and water. Although confined principally to the broad channel of the Orinoco, the *arraus* are met with also in great abundance in the Apure, the Arauca, and most of the other large tributaries of that river; as also in the Amazon, according to Bates' statements, who has devoted a chapter to this magnificent turtle, and to the exciting scenes which take place during the gathering of their eggs by the Amazonian Indians and Portuguese traders. As I intend to allude again to this subject, I will return to their congeners of the flooded lands west of the Orinoco. To convey a distinct idea of the prodigious abundance of this species, it may suffice to say that by merely driving a herd of wild cattle or horses at full speed into any pond of these savannas, the first wave produced by the sudden splash will heave up thousands of turtles upon the beach. Another method resorted to in the Llanos for obtaining them, is by raking in the soft mud in which these chelonia habitually bury themselves the moment they are alarmed. After this mud becomes thoroughly

dried by the summer's heat, they remain under its indurated crust in a dormant state until the commencement of the rainy season. Yet even here the poor creatures are insecure, as they are not unfrequently roused from their siesta by the hunter setting fire to the dry water plants, the ornaments of these natural ponds; at such times breaking through the earth crust which environs them, they in vain endeavor to escape their tormentors, who can then pick them up at their leisure.

In addition to the foregoing, there are two other varieties of tortoises found amidst the marshes and jungles of the Llanos; they are the *morrocoy* or land tortoise, having a hard and rounded shell, and the *jicotea*, an animal which appears to form the connecting link between turtles proper and tortoises; both are of excellent flavor, more especially the former, whose liver, dressed and fried in its own gall, is undoubtedly superior to that most prized of all epicurean morsels, *foie gras*. It is very large as compared with the size of the animal, decreasing however very materially if its owner has had a long fast, which, as this reptile, like all others of the class, can and does frequently live a long time without food, has doubtless occasioned the popular error that it feeds on its own liver when long deprived of other nourishment.

During the season of great droughts, the *morrocoy* seeks the hollow trunks of trees for shelter, where it lives entirely without nourishment for several months, until, feeling the dampness produced by the first showers of spring penetrating his subterranean abode, he moves slowly out to browse upon the tender shoots

of water plants and prairie lilies. The shell of this tortoise is so hard that nothing short of heavy blows from an axe can separate the thick plates of which it is formed, and a locomotive engine might pass over it without producing the least effect upon its unimpressible tenant. Long after the carcass has been cut up for cooking, and is in water boiling over the fire, the pieces are incessantly in motion, and it is not until the boiling has been continued many successive hours, that the meat is fit for eating.

The land tortoise does not deposit its eggs in the sand, as is the practice with its congener of the water, but drops them indiscriminately into any convenient hole, leaving the care of hatching them to the heat of the earth. The egg, which is larger than a hen's, is extremely white, spherical in form, and very hard. The male is readily distinguished from the female by a deep depression of its pectoral plate, that of the female being perfectly even with the ground.

I have been assured by reliable parties that the blood of the *morrocoy* is a specific for neuralgia, if rubbed, while still warm, upon the part affected.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MATA TOTUMO.

Little was accomplished in the way of hunting during the two weeks we passed at Mata Gorda, occupying ourselves mainly in building a ranch for the establishment of a caporal and his family, with corrals attached, sufficiently spacious to accommodate a large drove. Other parts of the estate requiring immediate attention, we removed from Mata Gorda to Mata Totumo, a retired corner of the savannas, whose proximity to other cattle farms exposed it to the constant depredations of poachers. In this way vast numbers of our cattle were annually lost to us; it had accordingly become necessary to establish there also a Fundacion, or small farm with a resident caporal, who should exercise a strict surveillance and take charge of a small herd of tame cattle as a nucleus for a permanent settlement in that exposed frontier.

Hardly were we established in the new encampment, when a party of our men in scouring the savanna encountered a band of these cattle poachers, who had already collected a sufficient drove to make

them comfortable to the year's end, and were hastening home with their unlawful booty. Our people immediately gave chase, but succeeded in capturing two only of the robbers. After whipping these most unmercifully, as is customary in the Llanos for similar offences, and giving them in addition the positive assurance that, if again found within the precincts of the estate, they would fare even worse, the rascals were at length allowed to depart without further punishment.

As usual in all our prairie encampments, much time was occupied in destroying baneful weeds and reptiles. Snakes especially were so plentiful as to at times greatly endanger our barefooted community. That habit is second nature, was certainly strikingly exemplified in the present instance, for in a few days we came to notice the heretofore dreaded snakes as little as though so many harmless earthworms. Our fears, if not their cause, being at length entirely removed, we next erected a shelter from the inclemency of the weather for our abundant luggage, no small cause of anxiety, situated as we were at a long distance from the source of any fresh supplies. Afterwards we commenced raising corrals for our increasing herds. Fortunately building materials were very abundant; and the bamboo, that graceful representative of the grasses, was of the greatest utility. Its tall and pliant stems afforded all that was necessary for rafters and fence rails, serving also various other uses. To duly estimate the size attained by this giant grass of the tropics, it is necessary to understand that some stems reach the astonishing height of thirty

or even forty feet, with a corresponding thickness of six or seven inches at their base; and as these bamboos spring in immense clusters from the ground, they grow at last into an aspect which is truly beautiful. Innumerable slender leaves of a delicate sea green color, clothe in masses the tops of these huge stems, curving them downward by their weight, and giving them, especially when sporting with the soft breezes of the pampas, the appearance of waving plumes of most magnificent proportions, rising, bending, swaying in long, graceful sweeps over the tops of the surrounding trees. An elegant writer, describing this majestic Queen of the Grasses, has beautifully said, "Grace, delicacy, richness of form and color, every element of vegetable beauty, appear combined in this luxuriant dweller by the streams of the tropics. Nothing is more cheerful to the eye of the heated and wearied traveller, than the deep rocky basins formed by mountain streams when filled with water, and overshadowed by clumps of bamboo. They often lean over the stream on one side and arch the pathway on the other, excluding almost every ray of sunlight from the cool recesses below. Their delicate brittle leaves are stirred by the tiniest zephyr, and bend to the pressure of the butterfly and the bee. Sometimes clumps of bamboo stand on either side of the roads and form long vaulted passages, as if by fretted Gothic arches, with here and there branches of rich flowers and leaves hanging down like beautiful corbels. When the gale of the hurricane comes, these groves of bamboo exchange an aspect of beauty for that of grandeur. They are heaved and tossed like

the billows of the sea, and their rich foliage driven in every direction appears like surges breaking on the rocks."

No sooner was the majada in readiness, than we commenced the somewhat laborious, but at the same time pleasingly exciting business of filling it, for which purpose we called upon the neighboring cattle farms of La Yagua and Caucagua for assistance. So effectual were our efforts, that in a few days we had collected two thousand animals for the brand, most of which, having long passed the age when this operation is usually performed, gave us in consequence a great deal of trouble. Occasionally, by way of relaxation from our labors, we busied ourselves in training the boys in the manly art of *torear*, or the scarcely less dangerous one of breaking in wild horses, on which especially the hardy dwellers of the Llanos eminently pride themselves. During our sojourn at Mata Totumo, its owner became concerned in an incident highly illustrative of this peculiar pride, so universal a trait among these children of Nature and the Sun, illustrative no less of the almost entire freedom from conventional restraint which exists between master and servant in the Llanos. Our Leader had taken a strong fancy to a beautiful cream colored horse, which, although partially trained to the saddle, missed no opportunity of practising some of his old tricks, a favorite one being apparently to unseat, whenever possible, his rider. This amusement he several times indulged in at the expense of his master, and, as it chanced, always in presence of his pet cap-

oral, Sarmiento, who invariably gave *carte blanche* to his own witticisms on such occasions. To these the good-humored master replied one day by challenging him to ride the horse round the camp on a run without being thrown, a dollar to be added to his wages if successful; if the reverse, the same amount to be thereafter deducted. "Done," cried Sarmiento, extending his hand familiarly to his master; and without more words, having blindfolded the horse by means of a sliding leather strap attached to the bridle, called *tapaojos*, he placed upon him his own saddle and holsters, and the next moment was firmly seated on his back. Then, removing the bandage, he at once commenced belaboring the refractory stallion with his *chaparro*, showering such powerful blows upon his haunches, that the terrified animal rushed headlong through the camp, rearing, plunging, and tearing along the plain at a fearful pace. All in vain were the efforts of the nigh frantic steed to shake the unmerciful Centaur from his back; the poor animal had to strive against one with whom contention was ineffectual, and who finally brought him back triumphantly to the camp as submissively meek as he had previously been savage and refractory.

Shortly after our arrival in that secluded spot, came the Corporation of Mantecal, under whose jurisdiction we were, accompanied by many of the inhabitants, to pay their respects and personal regards to the former chieftain of the Llanos and late President of the Republic, tendering him at the same time the hospitalities of the town—a few straggling huts. It

was a surprise party, nevertheless we acquitted ourselves with becoming hospitality. Two fat calves were immediately slaughtered; and these, together with numbers of armadillos, galapagos, and a fine sow from the swamps near by, formed a banquet not unworthy a London board of aldermen. A hastily constructed table, its top made from laths of bamboo and tied with *bejucos* or creepers to four rough posts set in the ground, was soon raised under the trees; the broad leaves of the wild plantain formed the table cloth, while the shells of galapagos served the double purpose of plates and dishes, entirely in keeping with the rural entertainment.

Here, as well as at Mata Gorda, game was most abundant, and we could at all times count upon a ready supply with which to vary the more substantial dishes. Deer were plentiful in the surrounding woods; but I found them, after killing several, too thin at this season to be worth hunting, especially as the savannas were teeming with the finest cattle and wild hogs; the latter are in good condition at all times, and each day our men brought to camp the spoils of one or more *capones* hanging from the saddles.

The ant-bear or great ant-eater, a stout and powerful animal measuring six feet from the snout to the end of the tail, also ranged these prairies; but although his flesh is well-flavored and easily procured, it is never used for food, owing to his repulsive appearance. "He is chiefly found in the inmost recesses of the forest, and seems partial to the low and swampy parts near creeks, where the trocly-tree grows. There

he goes up and down in quest of ants, of which there is never the least scarcity, so that he soon obtains a sufficient supply of food with very little trouble. He cannot travel fast; man is superior to him in speed. Without swiftness to enable him to escape from his enemies; without teeth, the possession of which would assist him in self-defence; and without the power of burrowing in the ground, by which he might conceal himself from his pursuers, he still is capable of ranging through these wilds in perfect safety; nor does he fear the fatal pressure of the serpent's fold, or the teeth of the famished jaguar. Nature has formed his fore-legs wonderfully thick, and strong, and muscular, and armed his feet with three tremendous sharp and crooked claws. Whenever he seizes an animal with these formidable weapons, he hugs it close to his body, and keeps it there till it dies through pressure,

or through want of food. Nor does the ant-bear in the meantime suffer much from loss of aliment, as it is a well-known fact that he can go longer without food than, perhaps, any other animal, excepting the land-tortoise. His skin is of a texture that perfectly resists the bite of a dog; his hinder parts are protected by thick and shaggy hair, while his immense tail is large enough to cover his whole body." *

Numerous also were the foot-prints of the jaguar; yet, in my frequent perambulations through the forest, it was never my fortune to encounter this despot of the howling wilderness, although I one day mistook for his voice that of the *titiriji* or great horned owl of the pampas. I found him perched among the branches of a *guamo* tree, inclining his large head toward me with a scrutinizing look peculiar to those birds, as if taking mental notes of my appearance. Whenever I remained perfectly quiet he gave utterance to his unearthly hootings, the woods echoing and re-echoing the dismal sounds. The *titiriji* would seem to be possessed of some ventriloquial power, for his voice, loud and deep as it was, yet appeared to issue from a distance. The frequent effect of this peculiarity is to mislead the unaccustomed hunter, who by it is readily induced to wander on and on in unavailing search. Having contemplated at leisure this singular bird, I finally levelled my fowling-piece at him, and brought him down with a charge of buckshot which I had destined for a deer. It proved a very fine specimen, with wings as large as those of a

* Waterton's "Wanderings in South America."

good sized turkey, while two horn-like tufts of feathers rose on each side of the head, which, in addition to the large, glaring eyes, gave him a truly ferocious aspect. His food consists of all kinds of wild fowl; however, not being over scrupulous, he devours with equal relish rats, mice and snakes; while even monkeys of the smaller sort are often his prey. This owl inhabits for the most part the loneliest and gloomiest portions of the forest; but is occasionally seen solemnly watching from some convenient tree-top the various inhabitants of the farmyard.

MANTECAL.

In compliance with an invitation tendered to the General and his suite by the good people of Mantecal, we started in a few days to visit their village, not far distant from our encampment. When within three miles of the place, we were welcomed by a large concourse of the inhabitants coming to escort us. Almost the whole population turned out, saluting our entry into the town with the firing of blunderbuses and other firearms, and further gracing it with a most discordant uproar of rickety harps, violins, and bandolas, enough to have driven frantic the "Enraged Musician" of Hogarth.

Mantecal was at one time quite a flourishing town, notwithstanding the wars which ravaged it for many successive years; but since the great epidemic of 1832, and subsequently, it has been well nigh depopulated, while the few inhabitants who were not swept away by the scourge, abandoned their homes. Thus the

once busy community became almost a dismal wilderness,

> "Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
> The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake."

At the time of our visit to Mantecal but few houses remained standing, sad monuments of past prosperity. We spent three days there, and the inhabitants, hospitable in spite of their miserable condition, entertained us to the utmost of their ability. Not only did they provide the best accommodations the village afforded, but treated us in addition to a nightly fandango, in which people of all castes and conditions joined. These festivities ended, we gladly returned to our prairie home, the more especially that the important duties we had there to perform would probably delay our return to Maracay several weeks longer; also the rainy season was fast approaching and each day we had warnings of the coming tempest then brewing in the south.

We continued to hunt those savannas while there were any *orejanos* to brand, adding largely in the meantime to our stock of reserved oxen for the markets of the upper country, which had already increased to a considerable drove. We also made several excursions to the neighboring cattle farms for the purpose of separating from their herds all the *orejanos* whose mothers bore our brand. Judging from the number of calves there collected, and without taking into consideration those yearly discarded by the mothers, it was easy to perceive that the revenues of those estates were greatly increased at our

cost, their original stock being vastly inferior to ours. In this manner many of the minor cattle farms enriched themselves at the expense of wealthy neighbors.

CHAPTER XIX.

MONKEY NOTIONS.

The *guamos* were now in full bearing, their luscious pods a grateful refreshment to the heated and thirsty rambler through the woods. Monkeys and macaws are particularly fond of this fruit; and on the tops of all the highest guamo-trees could be seen family reunions of these chatterers apparently discussing the merits of the crop.

Of monkeys, the most conspicuous in the Llanos are the *araguato*, or howling monkey (Simia ursina), and the *machango* (S. sajous), this last a small grey monkey, very common in most parts of Venezuela. On account of its wonderful agility and vivacious disposition the machango is much esteemed as a pet by the inhabitants, many of whom keep one or more tied to a post in the court-yard, where they enact to some extent the rôle of buffoon to the whole family. They are, however, very mischievous creatures, doing every possible damage in the house the moment they are at large; but are especially destructive to cacao plan-

tations and cornfields. When about to commence their depredations in these, they usually assemble in great numbers and exercise many precautions; the first step is to station several of their number as sentinels upon the highest trees, or any elevated situation overlooking the avenues leading to the plantation, whence they warn the others of approaching danger. The next proceeding is that of placing those of the females—which on account of their young are prevented from assisting in the foray—in some safe retreat. The precautions completed, they invest the cornfield in earnest, pulling down the stocks and tearing off ears of corn with astonishing expedition, chattering, laughing, and yelling all the while like a set of mischievous boys in the absence of the dominie. When they have accumulated a sufficient number of ears, they split the husks, and tying them in pairs by means of an ingenious knot peculiar to themselves, called in consequence monkey-tie, they throw them across their backs, and thus equipped hasten to hide their booty in some safe nook difficult of discovery by the neglectful majordomo, who not unfrequently conceals his own defalcations in the yield of the plantation by ascribing the deficiency to the thieving monkeys. It often happens that while these last are engaged in their depredations, they are surprised by the owner of the cornfield, who, eluding the vigilance of the scouts, suddenly appears and pours a shower of shot into their midst. Then with shrill cries of alarm the whole troop scamper off helter-skelter, tumbling, pitching or hobbling along on all fours, but never dropping a particle of their plunder. The belief ob-

tains in the Llanos, that when at length safe in their haunts, the careless sentinels are arraigned before a council of elders, who after due deliberation condemn them, after which the guilty parties are tied to a tree and soundly whipped.

No less remarkable is their ingenious method of crossing torrents and other minor streams which they often encounter in their ceaseless perambulations through the forest. As among men, all cannot swim with equal facility, so it is also with monkeys; accordingly the leaders of the troop, generally the strongest of the party, climb to the spreading branches of some tree projecting over the stream; one of them then twists his tail firmly around a branch, and letting his body hang, seizes upon the tail of the nearest comrade, who in his turn performs the same operation with the next, and so on until a sort of chain or living pendulum is formed, which in obedience to the laws of equilibrium oscillates slowly but constantly from their combined efforts to reach the opposite bank. This finally achieved, the last monkey secures himself to the most convenient tree. The others of the chain, now disengaged from the tree at the opposite side of the stream, wade through the water, each helped by his neighbor, assisted likewise by the current. Some are, however, occasionally drowned, the last one in the chain especially, which circumstance has probably given rise to the popular proverb, *el último mono siempre se ahoga*—the last monkey is sure to be drowned. Sagacious as these animals undoubtedly are, it is often very easy to entrap them. One of the simplest methods consists in cutting a

number of holes in a gourd barely large enough to admit of squeezing in the monkey's hands. The gourd thus prepared is filled with corn and secured to the trunk of a tree, then shaken violently for a time so as to attract the attention of the monkeys, and a few grains of corn scattered in the neighborhood of the trap. The gourd is in fact the dinner bell of the monkeys, which no sooner hear the well known sound, than they descend in great numbers from their aerial homes, and each in turn seizing the gourd, grasps through one of the holes a handful of corn. But in vain do they struggle to withdraw their hands without relinquishing the prize; and at this critical moment, the concealed author of their mishap suddenly makes his appearance, and tying their hands carries them off to his cottage in the woods.

More taciturn and retiring in his habits than the preceding, the *araguato*—a large reddish monkey of the ring-tail genus—exhibits none of those mischievous tricks which characterize the former, never approaching the haunts of man nor ravaging the fields of the industrious farmer. His only food consists of wild fruits, gathered as, with astonishing rapidity, he springs from branch to branch. All the limbs of this great monkey are admirably adapted to his roving habits; in these he is assisted very materially by his long prehensile tail, which acts the part of a fifth hand.

The roar of the *araguato* is so extraordinary, that persons who hear it for the first time invariably imagine it that of the jaguar. I think I may assert without fear of mistake, that it can be heard at the dis-

tance of three miles, especially in damp and cloudy weather. "This most striking of all animal voices is heard occasionally at sunrise and sunset, and sometimes in the heat of the day, but more frequently durng the darkness of night. When near, the roar is terrific; a naturalist has compared it to the tempest howling through rocky caverns. It is a voice so unearthly that, heard unexpectedly for the first time, it would fill the mind with the most melancholy forebodings." *

"The Indians pretend," observes Humboldt, that when the *araguatos* fill the forest with their howlings, there is always one that chants as leader to the chorus. The observation is pretty accurate. During a long interval one solitary and strong voice is generally distinguished, till its place is taken by another voice of a different pitch. We may observe from time to time the same instinct of imitation among frogs, and almost all animals which live together and exert their voices in union. The missionaries further assert that when a female among the *araguatos* is on the point of bringing forth, the choir suspends its howlings till the moment of the birth of the young. I could not myself judge of the accuracy of this assertion; but I do not believe it to be entirely unfounded. I have observed that when an extraordinary incident—the moans, for instance, of a wounded *araguato*—fixed the attention of the band, the howlings were for some minutes suspended.

* Gosse: The Romance of Natural History.

The face of this singular monkey is nearly concealed by a sandy, bushy beard, extending below and projecting considerably beyond his chin, giving him a very dignified appearance. So striking is their resemblance to the human species, that once, after having shot one, I almost felt as though I had committed a murder. When I raised the poor creature from the ground upon which he had fallen, his large grey eyes were bathed in tears, and every feature expressed the deepest agony. Casting upon me a most eloquent look of reproach, he endeavored to push me aside; but too much enfeebled by his wound, lay down and calmly resigned himself to the scrutinizing gaze of my English companions, who discussed and disputed about the division of his still panting body—one wanting the skin for a smoking cap and the drum of the throat for the bowl of his pipe, while the other would be contented with nothing less than the whole carcass. For my own part, I only desired to get out of sight of the dying creature; and shouldering my gun, departed in a mood which determined me never again to lift my hand against these innocent wild men of the woods.

South America may be said to be, *par excellence*, the home of the monkey tribe. Besides the foregoing, the great forest south of the pampas of Apure is filled with the cries, yells, and roarings by night and day—for some are nocturnal and others diurnal—of countless troops of the various families of these quadrumana, roaming through it, from the mysterious *Salvaje* (supposed by many to be a great and powerful monkey, who, Gorilla-like, seizes upon defenceless

women and carries them off to some inaccessible tree in the forest), down to the tiny marmoset, not larger than a flying-squirrel, but all possessing more or less that degree of intelligence and cunning so nearly akin to human instinct. Some are white-faced, with the rest of the body black; others black-faced, forming a curious contrast with a thick head of hair perfectly white. Bates observed on the Upper Amazon a very rare species with a scarlet face, making the animal look pretty much like an Indian bedaubed with arnatto,* as is the practice of the aborigines in a wild state. Some have blue noses; others a dark ring around the eyes, giving the creature a most ludicrous appearance, as if adorned with a pair of spectacles.

In the same region is found another curious genus of monkeys, namely, the *owl-faced night apes*, described by Bates and Humboldt as being of small size, the body about a foot long and the tail fourteen inches, and are thickly clothed with soft, grey, and brown hair, similar in substance to that of the rabbit. They sleep all day long in hollow trees, and come forth to prey on insects, and eat fruits, only in the night. Their physiognomy reminds one of an owl, or tiger-cat; the face is round and encircled by a ruff of whitish fur. Bates had one of these animals given him by a *compadre*, as a present from his newly-baptized godson, and he describes it as being a great favorite with every one, from the cleanliness of its habits and the prettiness of its features and ways;

* The pulpy covering of the seeds of Bixa orellana.

and the Municipal Judge of Ega, Don Carlos Mariana, had another species of the same genus, which was most amusingly tame, delighting to be caressed by all persons who came into the house, and at night sleeping with his master in his own hammock, and nestling in his bosom half the day as he lay reading.

A very striking feature of most South American monkeys is the strong resemblance they bear to the Indian race, just as those of Africa resemble the negro, and those of the Indian Archipelago the Malay race of men. Some of them look so much like Indians, that one cannot help imagining there exists a near relationship between these dwellers of the forest. The *capuchin* of the Orinoco, which Waterton has made so celebrated, under the vague appellation of *nondescript*, and the *titi* of the same locality, may be mentioned as exceptions to the rule, the former on account of a long, bushy beard, and soft, glossy black head of hair, nicely parted in the middle, like a refined exquisite, and the latter with its finely-modelled head and most expressive features, which added to a high degree of intelligence and sprightly restlessness possessed by the little creature, make it a favorite pet, with ladies especially, when reduced to domestic life. The *titi* is a medium-sized monkey, with hair of a golden yellow; and what adds to its attraction as a pet, is its cleanly habits, so unlike those of its congeners, washing its hands whenever it comes near water, which makes them look at all times like those of a well-nursed child. But, woe to the elegantly furnished boudoir, if it should contrive to get loose,

which it often does in spite of precautions, for it will prove a perfect *enfant terrible* amongst the choicest trinkets of feminine adornment, smashing everything within its reach, and examining into every nook and corner of the wardrobe with perfect infantile curiosity. On the other hand, it will completely rid the house of spiders and other like vermin, for which tropical climates are famous, not even sparing the favorite songster in its cage, for it is quite omnivorous in its tastes. Humboldt relates of one he kept in his canoe, during his tedious exploration of these rivers, that it would take particular pleasure in looking over the plates of a work on Natural History, which the great philosopher used to turn over occasionally for his own and his pet's amusement ; sitting itself on the lap of its master, it would look intently on the figures of the various animals with as much interest as a child would evince, under like circumstances, but without betraying any especial emotion, until it came to the plate representing the insects. Although the engravings were not colored, the *titi* would now advance its little hand in the hope of catching a spider, a grasshopper, or a wasp, whenever it perceived one of these insects, of which it is particularly fond. It remained perfectly indifferent when it was shown engravings of skeletons or heads of mammiferous animals. "No other monkey," adds Humboldt, "has so much the physiognomy of a child as the *titi* ; there is the same expression of innocence, the same playful smile, the same rapidity in the transition from joy to sorrow. Its large, handsome eyes are instantly filled with

tears when it is seized with fear." Even in the wild state, the *titi* evinces a degree of cunning seldom found in others of its class. An instance of this is shown in the manner in which it robs the bee colony not only of its rich stores of sweet honey, but also of its industrious tenants; stationing itself at the mouth of the beehive—usually in the hollow branch of some tree in the forest—the *titi* catches and eats up every member of the busy colony as they go in and out on their laborious errands. When no more insects can be obtained, and knowing instinctively that within that mysterious abode is to be found something sweeter still, the little imp diligently commences to dig into the aperture until a passage wide enough for the hand is made, and then commences the work of destruction upon grubs and honey-combs. Should these be placed too far down the opening to be reached with the hand, the *titi* introduces its tail—which is considerably longer than its arms—into the deposit of honey, and withdrawing it, well bedaubed with the coveted prize, commences to enjoy it with great gusto.

Isidore Geoffrey St. Hilaire relates of another individual of this genus, that "it distinguished between different objects depicted on an engraving. M. Audouin showed it the portraits of a cat and a wasp; at these it became very much terrified; whereas, at the sight of a figure of a grasshopper or beetle, it precipitated itself on the picture, as if to seize the objects there represented."

Bates mentions another rare species of the same genus, first described by Humboldt, which was, if pos-

sible, more playful and intelligent than any of the preceding. "This rare and beautiful little monkey is only seven inches in length, exclusive of the tail. It is named *leoninus*, on account of the long brown mane which depends from the neck, and which gives it very much the appearance of a diminutive lion. In the house where it was kept it was familiar with every one; its greatest pleasure seemed to be to climb about the bodies of different persons who entered. The first time I went in, it ran across the room straightway to the chair on which I had sat down, and climbed up to my shoulder; arrived there, it turned round and looked into my face, showing its little teeth, and chattering as though it would say, 'Well, and how do *you* do?' It showed more affection toward its master than toward strangers, and would climb up to his head a dozen times in the course of an hour, making a great show every time of searching there for certain animalcula."

The same writer describes the ingenious mode of obtaining live specimens, as practised by Indian hunters. "The mother, as in other species of the monkey order, carries her young on her back. Individuals are obtained alive by shooting them with the blow-pipe and arrows tipped with diluted urarí poison. They run a considerable distance after being pierced, and it requires an experienced hunter to track them. He is considered the most expert who can keep pace with a wounded one, and catch it in his arms when it falls exhausted. A pinch of salt, the antidote to the poison, is then put in its mouth, and the creature revives."

As I write this in the quiet seclusion of the country, I hear among the trees surrounding one of the finest mansions in Connecticut, the twittering chatter of another little monkey, or marmoset, a *titi* of the coast of Cartagena, which I procured from hence not long ago. It is quite small, of a reddish-brown color, with a face resembling more an African negro (for it is jet black) than the aborigines of the opposite coast. A thick woolly coat of white hair covers its head, so that at a distance the little creature looks as if ornamented with a cap of snow-white feathers. Enjoying with myself the freedom of the hospitable mansion, it is allowed to roam at pleasure among the branches of the trees, but as the sun goes down, it invariably seeks the comforts of its bed, prepared by its kind mistress, inside a market-basket in her own room. Monito—this is its name—is an early riser, which makes it rather inconvenient for the other inmates of the room; for, although the windows are left open through the night, it will not stir until its breakfast has been placed before the little scamp, who, in the meantime, keeps such squealing and twittering as to rouse "Nini" and her mamma. Its hunger satisfied, it bounds away to the tree-tops, leaping from branch to branch with astonishing agility, which never fails to attract a crowd of squirrels, which, mistaking it for one of their tribe, run towards the stranger; but no sooner do they perceive the jetty phyz and snowy locks of Don Monito, than, with one yell of astonishment, and the utmost horror depicted in their countenance, they scamper off to a respecta-

ble distance. Then follows a sort of inquiring colloquy between both parties, all chatting at the same time, and making the air resound all the while with the chirping palaver. It does not get beyond this, however, for, at the first advance made on either side, one of the parties, or both, scamper off ingloriously, thus verifying the saying—

> "He who fights and runs away
> Lives to fight another day."

Not satisfied with the abundant fare of spiders caught around the roof, Monito comes regularly to the house at certain hours, to be fed on more dainty food, consisting of bits of sugar, cake, and delicious grapes, fresh from the grapery, which the thoughtful ladies of the mansion have in readiness for their guest. At times it pays a visit to the laundress, at her establishment, for whom it has evinced a strong attachment, owing, I suspect, to the fact that said dame invariably treats the favorite to a good slice of bread and butter, of which it seems to be very fond also. Selecting a comfortable place in some corner of the room, it spends an hour or so chatting to the worthy laundress all the while in a language only intelligible to itself. I fear, however, that the country air of a northern climate does not quite agree with the little South-American, for it has been observed, at times, in the morning, shaking from head to foot, and seeking some convenient place on the roof of the piazza, where it can have the full benefit of the sun's rays, a sure sign of a coming attack of chills and fever.

This circumstance, and the fact of its having become more irritable and morose than usual, has induced me to procure, from a friend in town, another small monkey, in whose company it came from South America, although of a different species, to see if the presence of its former associate will restore its spirits; but to no purpose, for, after a fair trial, we find that the attentions of this last, which is a most restless and mischievous creature, pulling the invalid's tail and silvery tufts of hair, whenever they are brought together, instead of proving a comfort to Monito, throws it into violent fits.

The monkey in question is the *cari-blanco*, white-faced, of the River Sinu, a higher grade of ape than the marmosets, and is, in consequence, one of the most intelligent individuals of the family. It is really entertaining to see such a small creature aping childhood so well as to amuse itself and the rest of the family whose hospitality it enjoys, with a doll and some marbles which it stole from the baby; and one of the ladies having shown it a musical toy, which she blew to attract its notice, the mimicking creature at once snatched the toy from her hand, and immediately applied it to its mouth, endeavoring to produce the same sounds, although without effect; whereupon it tried a like experiment on the doll—which it carries constantly under its arm—but with no better results. Another source of amusement is derived from a kitten belonging to the baby, the sight of which produced at first as much astonishment and curiosity as the interview between Monito and the

squirrels brought about. Now they are as good friends as if they had known each other a lifetime ; so much so that the baby finds it difficult to separate her pussy from the dreaded monkey, which "Nini" abominates ever since Monito bit her badly, for want of experience on her part in dealing with these spiteful creatures.

It is a fact worthy of notice, that most monkeys, especially those of a higher grade, manifest on all occasions a strong attachment to young animals, especially puppies and kittens, caressing and handling them with the same care that a human being bestows on the young of their own kind. I once obtained, in Costa Rica, a large female monkey of the ring-tail species, which, in intelligence and *monerias* (monkey tricks) surpassed any creature of this description I have yet seen or heard of; so much so that Herr Müller, a German baker of San José, who owned the pet, had given her the name of "Panchita," or Little Frances ; and so captivated was I too by Miss Panchita, that I at once entered into negotiations with the baker for her purchase. But of this more hereafter in the *Second Series* of these sketches.

Well, said Panchita was, like the rest of her class, particularly fond of puppies ; but not possessing sufficient discrimination to distinguish between the ages of animals, and judging of this only through their size, she seized, on one occasion, a small poodle, which happened to pass near her, mistaking it for a puppy, and pressing it to her breast with appropriate demonstrations of motherly solicitude, endeavored to induce

the dog to avail itself of the proffered donation ; but a bite from the ungrateful chap warned the would-be nurse of the dangers arising from too close an intimacy with strangers. Poor Panchita ! Having brought her along with me to New York, and placed her in Barnum's celebrated boarding-school for dumb beasts from all parts of the world, she shared the fate of the "Happy Family" during the disastrous fire which consumed that renowned establishment.

As an instance of the affection and intelligence displayed by these singular creatures, I will mention here another South American monkey, from the Upper Amazon river, of which the indefatigable collector of natural history, Mr. Bates, says, alluding to one possessed by a neighbor of his at Ega : "My friend was a tailor, and the little pet used to spend the greater part of the day seated on his shoulder, while he was at work on his board. It showed, nevertheless, great dislike to strangers, and was not on good terms with any other member of my friend's household than himself. I saw no monkey that showed so strong a personal attachment as this gentle, timid, silent little creature. The eager and passionate Cebi seem to take the lead of all South American monkeys in intelligence and docility, and the Coaitá has perhaps the most gentle and impressive disposition ; but the Parauacú, although a dull, cheerless animal, excels all in this quality of capacity of attachment to individuals of our own species. It is not wanting in intelligence as well as moral goodness, proof of which was furnished one day by an act of our little pet. My

neighbor had quitted his house in the morning, without taking Parauacú with him, and the little creature having missed its friend, and concluded, as it seemed, that he would be sure to come to me, both being in the habit of paying me a daily visit together, came straight to my dwelling, taking a short cut over gardens, trees, and thickets, instead of going the roundabout way of the street. It had never done this before, and we knew the route it had taken only from a neighbor having watched its movements. On arriving at my house, and not finding its master, it climbed to the top of my table, and sat with an air of quiet resignation waiting for him. Shortly afterwards my friend entered, and the gladdened pet then jumped to its usual perch on his shoulder."

I will conclude this chapter—already, I fear, too long—with some further remarks respecting the *Salvaje*, or "Wild Man of America," as it is called by those who, to this day, believe that such *nondescript*—for no one seems to have ever seen it, except the footprints—exists in the wilds of Venezuela. Both Father Gumilla and Humboldt allude to the belief entertained by the people of those regions in the existence of a great anthropoid ape, which was reputed to build huts, carry off women, and devour jealous husbands. It is curious, however, to see how these two great expounders of nature's wonders endeavor to solve the mystery. While the philosopher of the nineteenth century explains the "fable," as he calls it, by suggesting the existence in these wilds of "one of those large bears, the footprints of which resemble those of man, and

which are believed to carry off women," the devout philosopher of nearly two centuries ago boldly ascribes the doings of the dreaded creature to no other individual than the Devil himself, ever anxious to do all possible mischief among Christians, especially those of the newly-organized missions of the Upper Orinoco and Meta rivers ; in proof of this the good missionary father tells us that, "On one occasion, the infernal voice was distinctly heard by Capt. Don Domingo Zorrilla, a native of Rioja, in Spain, exhorting, from the top of a palm tree, the Gentile Indians, who were ready to come out of the forest and become good Christians, not to do it." And, adds the credulous historian : "Alarmed with this terrific noise, the valiant captain inquired of the Christian cacique who accompanied him, from whence proceeded those frightful sounds ? to which the cacique replied, that these were the utterances of the Devil, which the captain believed to be true, so great was the internal horror which he felt ; and I too believed it, by the faith I had in the great veracity of said captain, and other unmistakable proofs I perceived afterwards at the distance of only two leagues from the river Ubocá, all of which happened on the 23d of February, 1716."

Notwithstanding the strong faith entertained by the narrator on the "great veracity of the valiant captain," I am of opinion that the roar of a well-organized band of *araguatos* was mistaken on this occasion for the utterances of his Infernal Majesty.

Still, the story of the *Salvaje* is not altogether discredited, even by scientific men of high standing ;

among the latter I may mention the accomplished author of the "Romance of Natural History," who not only questions the authority of Humboldt in denying the existence of a great anthropomorphous monkey in America, but boldly comes in support of those who believe in this possible phenomena. I quote his words: "But it might be permitted, in return, to ask what "large bear" is known to inhabit Venezuela; and whether it is true that bears' footsteps have a signal resemblance to those of men; and that bears especially attack women. Is not such a bear in South America quite as gratuitous as the monkey himself? And, since species of *quadrumana* are characteristic of the forests of that region, may it not be possible that some one rivalling man in stature and strength, may there exist, as well as in Africa and the Oriental Archipelago? The mighty gorilla himself has only just been introduced to us." *

* Gosse: The Romance of Natural History—First Series, p. 281.

AMONG THE CROCODILES.

CHAPTER XX.

AMONG THE CROCODILES.

Having by this time completed our arrangements at Mata Totumo, we broke up our camp on the 15th of March and departed for Los Laureles, the ancient site of another cattle farm, now quite deserted, on the banks of the river Matiyure.

We found the house in ruins, and only a few remaining posts marking the boundary of the former corrals. The first duty, therefore, was that of repairing the fences, an operation which necessitated several days' hard labor. Meanwhile I found much enjoyment in exploring the woody banks of the river, the wildness of whose aspect had for me a peculiar charm. They were my daily resort, where, encompassed by the glorious solitude, I essayed to picture for others those lovely scenes which still perfume the shrine of memory in all their dewy freshness. To one who loves "the cool sequestered haunts of Nature," no spot could be more charming, nothing more inspiring than to recline under the venerable shade of some wide-branched guamo uplooking to the many-

tinted clouds as they sweep in solemn majesty beneath the blue veil of heaven, and seem to melt into the tree tops in the distance—trees whose gigantic height and size, wall with magnificent vegetation the steep banks rising on either side of the river, mirrored in its tranquil surface. The harsh scream of the heron, or the ominous hootings of the tiger-owl, alone wake the echoes where else

> "All things are calm, and fair, and passive—Earth
> Looks as if lulled upon an angel's lap
> Into a breathless, dewy sleep."

Yet is this beautiful river celebrated for the number and size of its crocodiles. As I sat sketching on the banks, I could perceive them gliding slowly under the still waters, the upper part of the head alone visible, and seeming to watch me with an evil eye. The beach being strewn with their egg shells, I concluded this to be a favorite resort with them during the breeding season. The female lays about forty eggs in a hole which she digs in the sand, leaving to the hot sun the care of hatching them. These eggs, twice as large as those of the turkey, are considered a great delicacy by the Indians and jaguars, who frequently purloin them before they are hatched.

The *caricari* is another great enemy of young crocodiles, attacking them as they come out of the shell. After they betake themselves to the water, the older ones, prompted no doubt by motives of family pride to keep them within their own circle, swallow these tender members, thus preventing all other intimacies. Notwithstanding this admirable provision of Divine

Wisdom, and a constant war maintained by man and beast against them, they are so numerous in some charcos of the river that, if stationary, their bodies

would completely bridge its surface from bank to bank.

Despite their great voracity, the mother exhibits some degree of tenderness toward her offspring. Possessed, in this case, of an instinct almost infallible, she returns at a period when incubation is completed, and assists her young in extricating themselves from the shell. Unlike the eggs of birds, crocodiles' eggs are soft and pliable as those of the turtle, yielding, when handled, to the pressure of the fingers, yet so tough that it is difficult to break them, and in appearance resembling white parchment. At the very moment of liberation, the young crocodiles display their savage nature in a wonderful degree, biting at every object within reach; also the same vicious propensity is exhibited by those extricated even before the completion of incubation. I was once greatly amused in watching a struggle between two caricaris

and one of these youngsters not larger than a good-sized lizard. Each time the birds made a dash at him, this little saurian, grunting savagely, darted forward with wide-open jaws, looking for all the world like a young dragon. During ten minutes the struggle continued without decided advantage on either side, when one of the assailants, changing his tactics, suddenly seized the crocodile by the neck with his sharp claws and soared triumphantly with him into high air. There loosing his hold, the bird followed his descent with wonderful rapidity, prepared, when he reached the ground, to repeat the blow; but already half stunned, the victim soon yielded to superior cunning.

When the savannas are overflowed by the swollen rivers, these carnivorous and malicious reptiles spread themselves over the face of the country, committing great havoc among young animals. So destructive had they proved to the calves and foals on this estate, that the owner on one occasion offered a reward of half a dollar a head for every crocodile killed upon his lands, it being sufficient for the claimant to produce, in evidence of success, the two great tusks of the upper jaws. The result of this *ukase* was, that before the expiration of a month, more than four hundred crocodiles had been destroyed; yet no sensible diminution was observable, neither did the persevering dragonade against them quench in the least their boldness. This expedient proving useless, they had been suffered to remain unmolested until our arrival at Los Laureles, when we determined to exterminate those at least which infested that pass of the river

where we performed our daily ablutions and watered the horses. Accordingly, one day a party of us, well provided with every necessary, started for a bend of the river where the water appeared to be very still and deep. None of the usual angling implements were required in this sport; we used only a strong lazo and a hoop about three feet in diameter made from a light vine common on the banks of these rivers. Around this hoop the fresh lungs of a bullock, cut into thin strips, were twisted and securely fastened. The running noose of the lazo was then laid over the bait and tied there with tendrils from the same vine. All being ready, this simple decoy was launched into the middle of the stream, we retaining on shore the other end of the lazo. Aroused by the splash, two large crocodiles soon appeared and rushed for the bait with open jaws. The successful one, in his eagerness to escape with his prize, burst the slender vines that secured the noose to the hoop, which last projected beyond his snout, and the noose on its recoil sliding over, firmly lazoed his upper jaw. With shouts of exultation we hastened to the assistance of the man who held the lazo, seeing him unable to cope with the monster, more than a match for half a dozen men. By our united efforts we finally succeeded in dragging him to within a few feet of the embankment, when, catching sight of our earnest faces watching him over the cliff, he tossed up his head with such sudden violence as to pull the thong through our hands to its full length, and retreated in triumph to the middle of the stream. The tough hide, however, from which the thong was twisted,

proved equal to the emergency, and with one more strenuous effort we succeeded in landing him upon the beach, while

"Le flot qui l'apporta, recule épouvanté."

Some of us who never before had so near a view of these vicious creatures, were astonished at its size and strength, and our Esculapius, assuming an appearance of bravery, approached among the first to contemplate the vanquished foe, but evidently quaking with apprehension of the huge tusks before him. His terror at length proving stronger than the dread of his companions' gibes, he seized the lazo, tugging with such desperate energy to close the fearful chasm that the thong slipped from his hands; he lost his balance, and the next moment found himself lying almost within reach of the still open jaws. From these, notwithstanding a considerable corporeal impediment, he escaped by springing with the agility of a cat up the embankment, where he remained, perhaps to ascertain whether the poet's statement that "distance lends enchantment to the view," was correct by the crocodile case before him. At length the object of his regards almost ceased struggling, sure sign that his strength was failing; then with one more pull we hauled him partially out of water, but no power could force him entirely therefrom, as each time on reaching the bank he braced his fore feet with unconquerable strength against it, so forcing himself back into the stream. In this predicament we had no other resource than to despatch him, and two or three sharp blows of a hatchet administered by the roguish

Roseliano, severed the upper jaw, with its beautiful row of teeth, from the head, a surgical operation performed under the supervision of our eminent Esculapius. The patient expired—no doubt to the Doctor's relief—not on his hands, and the "subject" was abandoned to the myriads of caribes which, although their teeth could produce little impression upon his tough cuirass, feasted with avidity on his blood so long as it flowed from his mutilated head.

We prepared a large supply of bait in like manner to the former, all of which was seized by the hungry crocodiles with the same fatal results to them. In the short space of three hours we succeeded in killing six large ones, and could no doubt have destroyed a greater number, had not the lazo been gnawed through by caribes, that pest of all rivers in this region.

The Indians of the Orinoco river, where the crocodiles are said to be still larger and more savage, if possible, than those of its tributary streams, make use of other devices for ridding themselves of those at least that infest the places frequented by them. One of these contrivances is as novel as most of the productions of their fertile imaginations are for ministering to their wants, and consists in shooting at the monsters' eyes arrows tipped with a wild cane said to be very poisonous to crocodiles, so much so that a few minutes after they are seen floating on the water quite dead. Another device, equally effective, consists in securing a strong rope, or lazo, to the middle of a short but stout stick of hard wood, which is then covered up with a large fish or piece of meat, and thrown in the

water : not many minutes elapse before the crocodile seizes and swallows the bait, stake and all, when it is quickly hauled on shore by means of the lazo in the hands of the Indians.

By way of sport, these people avail themselves of the same artifice to *torear*, as they call it, a crocodile on shore when sunning itself, but this time without the bait, as the man alone is sufficient allurement to rouse the monster's appetite, especially if it is a man-eater (*cebado*), the only improvement made on the stake being that of sharpening both ends of it. The Indian now seizes the stick by the middle, and fearlessly approaches the crocodile, which at once makes a dash at its antagonist with its jaws wide open ; but the *toreador* easily evades the onset by stepping aside a little, as the reptile, on account of the configuration of its spine, cannot turn round upon him, except after describing a long circle ; a second and a third onset are equally unsuccessful, as the sportsman purposely avoids the collision by moving off when the animal comes up close to him. Having by this time proved his dexterity the Indian gives it the *coup de grace* by plunging the stick in a vertical position into the ghastly jaws of the fierce monster, which, feeling confident of crushing its enemy this time between its powerful tusks, shuts them with a crash which only assists in forcing both ends of the stake into the upper and lower jaws ; thus transfixed, the once terror of the river now becomes the sport of the Indian boys, who eagerly seize upon the thong, and ignominiously drag the reptile powerless over the sand.

Our men secured a large supply of fat from the

intestinal membrane of the crocodiles: a sovereign remedy for bruises and cutaneous diseases among horses. By exposing this fat to the sun, in horns slightly punctured at the end, a fine oil equal to that of the whale, is obtained by percolation and collected in basins placed under the horns.

Selecting the jaws of the dead crocodiles containing the finest tusks, we distributed the latter among our friends for tinder boxes and amulets. It is universally believed throughout the Llanos that the tusks, when worn next the flesh of man or beast, will preserve the wearer from the poison of snakes, especially if obtained on Good Friday. For this reason the smaller ones, set in gold or silver, are worn suspended from the rosaries which form one of the principal ornaments of the people in those parts. It is further believed that rings made of the same material will apprise the wearer, of poison mixed in any draught by causing an instantaneous effervescence of the liquid. The supposed efficacy of these potential talismans was once peculiarly tested in our own camp.

Among the few luxuries carried by our commissariat into the Llanos was a basket of champagne, which was reserved for state occasions. One afternoon, while almost every person was enjoying his siesta, the temptation seized one of our men to search for aguardiente among the *petacas*. His good fortune discovered to him our little treasure of champagne, and grabbing a bottle he at once commenced cutting with his dagger the wires that secured the cork. Up this flew at last with a loud report, which broke the

dead silence of the camp and started to their feet more than one drowsy slumberer.

Our thief, seeing the profuse effervescence gushing out with great force, endeavored at first to arrest it by clapping his hands over the mouth of the bottle; but suddenly recollecting that he had on one of those mysterious tusk-rings, the suspicion flashed to his mind of poison intended for *el amo*, the master; and when in addition to this the bewildered knave perceived that apparently the more he endeavored to confine the liquid, so much more it frothed and bubbled, he was overpowered with terror, shrieking out in an ecstasy of horror, "Ave Maria Purisima! Help! Help! *cristianos;* this aguardiente must be poisoned, or else the devil is in it."

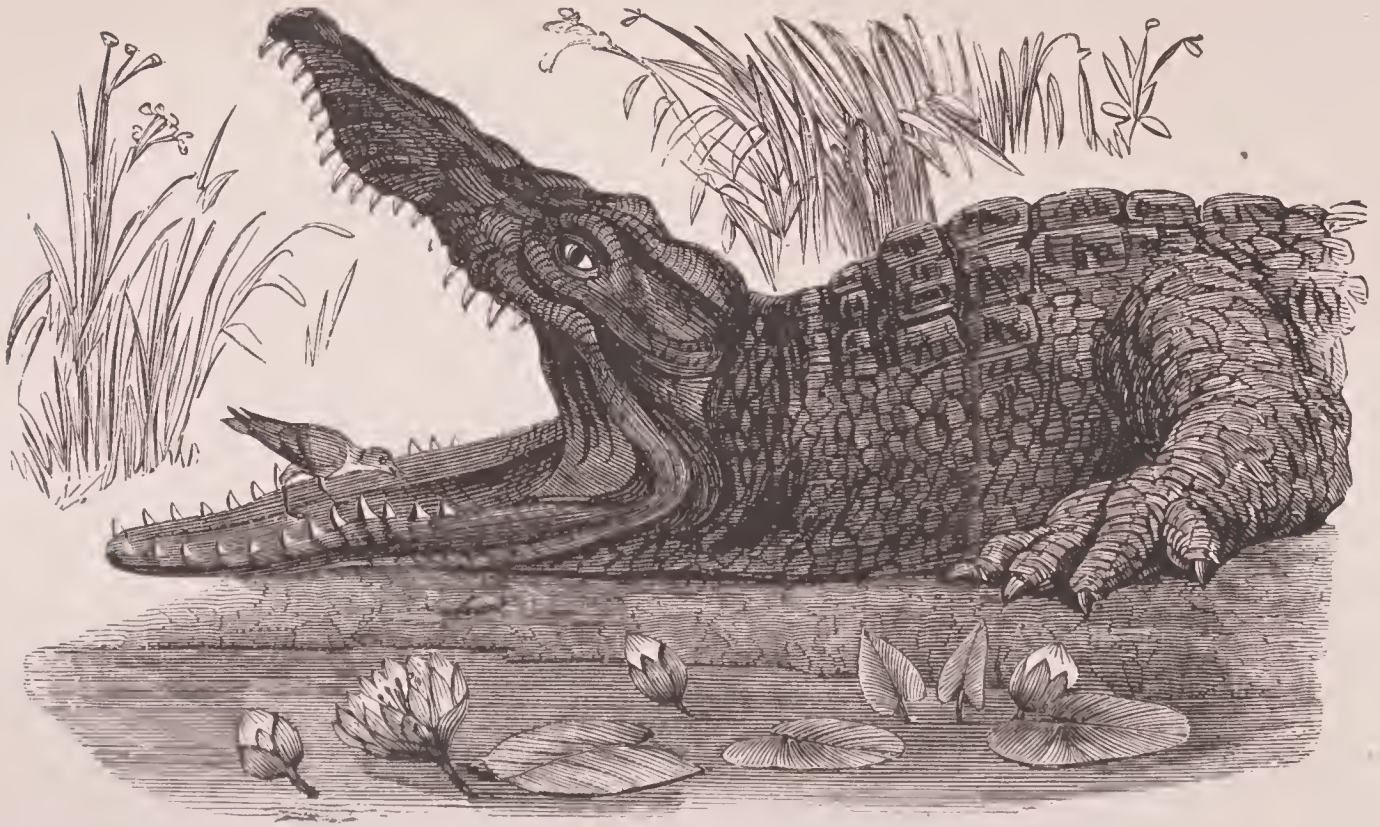
On hearing these cries, every one sprang from his hammock, imagining the camp attacked by a band of *malhechores*, and the would-be thief was thus caught in the very act.

As he was, however, out of his wits with fright, he escaped with only a mild reprimand, the more especially that we enjoyed several hearty laughs at his expense. Futile were our efforts at convincing the frightened fellow that champagne was very good drink; he evidently distrusted all our assertions. Some was then poured out and drank, and the bottle passed round; but when it came to his turn, he persistently refused to touch it. On being asked whether his surprise and repugnance arose from seeing the liquid rushing out of the bottle, his reply was, "Oh, no, *Señores;* I am not surprised to see it coming out, but how the devil did it get in?"

With the intention of finishing a sketch of one of the crocodiles, I next day revisited the battle field, and to my surprise discovered the absence of one of the dead bodies; but presently perceived the mailed carcass floating at some distance on the water. I was for some time at a loss to discover what had occasioned his change of position, and I finally concluded that its comrades must have given him honorable interment in the deep. Desiring to ascertain, if possible, the facts of the case, I determined to conceal myself near by and keep close watch. I had been in hiding only a few moments when at least half a dozen crocodiles approached the deceased, not, as I had imagined, to mourn his loss, but to feast upon the many fish in their turn gorging themselves upon the body. Then, almost to my horror, I beheld these monster insatiates rend in pieces and devour the melancholy remains of the dear defunct with grunts of revolting satisfaction. Nor did I perceive in this case any of those "crocodile tears" with which travellers tell us it is their hypocritical habit to bedew the head of a human victim. It is said that when they have devoured a man, finding themselves unable to swallow his head, they convey it to some secluded spot on the river banks, there to weep over and bewail their inability with cries which make night hideous.

The size and appearance of crocodiles must be sometimes most extraordinary, if we may credit our adventurous friend B., who boasted so intimate an acquaintance with their habits, that one could easily imagine such familiarity might breed contempt. Judge, O reader, if I speak not truly.

He related that one day, having labored successfully until noon in his piscatory pursuit, overcome by fatigue and the intense heat of a tropical sun, he turned his longing eyes toward shore in search of some friendly shelter; but perceiving that, between him and the only copse of trees which relieved the glaring scene, there stretched a dreary waste of burning sand, he had not courage to traverse, even to reach so tempting a goal—he sought a refuge more accessible. This to his great joy he just then discovered in the form of what appeared to be the wreck of an old canoe thrown on its side near the water's edge. Here was a cool retreat wherein to enjoy his siesta; so hastening toward it, his satisfaction was complete on finding it sufficiently capacious to admit of slinging to the protruding ribs his *chinchorro*, or grass hammock, which, with his guitar and gourd of aguardiente, were his inseparable companions. Refreshing himself with a good pull at the gourd, and stretching himself in his hammock, he soon slept the profound sleep of the weary. He awoke to find himself enveloped in a darkness which he might have supposed that of midnight, but that it was unrelieved by moon or friendly star. Completely bewildered, he sought a clew to this dark mystery by moving forward with cautious steps and extended hands, uncertain into what horror his next movement might betray him, when his surprised attention was attracted, first to the spongy nature of the ground, then to the clammy yet warm and sticky walls that on all sides encountered his extended fingers. The discovery of these facts was accompanied by the very unpleasant con-



CROCODILE BASKING IN THE SUN.

viction that he had mistaken the open jaws of some sleeping crocodile for an old bongo. However, with his recovery from the first shock of surprise returned the stoicism so characteristic of his race, which was the more entirely reinstated by finding his well-filled gourd with his beloved guitar lying near. Notwithstanding, however, a reviving draught from the former, he soon became conscious of a void in his internal economy, which he at once determined to fill at Mr. Crocodile's expense; thereupon drawing his knife, he without the least compunction made a meal from the tenderest morsels within reach. And so eating, drinking, sleeping and tuning his diminutive guitar to the cheering strains of some lively ballad of the Llanos, he remained for days, he knew not how many, an uncomplaining prisoner within those slimy walls. At length, while mournfully draining the last remaining drop within his faithful gourd, his dungeon walls were suddenly made visible to him by a faint ray of light which penetrated his very soul with the desire once more to behold its source. Snatching at the dear companions of his imprisonment, without another moment's delay he rushed for the opening that admitted the life-giving ray, and discovered to his delighted surprise that his jailer, having deserted the water for a siesta upon the sands—which he recollected was the occasional habit of these monsters—had left wide-open his prison doors. These he lost no time in passing, seizing with firm hand as he flew, his *chinchorro*, still suspended from the crocodile's tusks he had so almost fatally mistaken for the ribs of an old canoe.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CIMARRONERA.

We had been apprised that between a great bend of the river Matiyure—forming the southern boundary of our savannas—and an extensive flat overgrown with thorny bushes, there existed what the Llaneros call a *cimarronera*, or great hiding place for cattle, which, owing to the impenetrable nature of the jungle, had from time immemorial baffled the efforts of every majordomo who had hunted these savannas. Further we had ascertained that the cattle were there as numerous as a colony of ants; but so savage and shy, as to never venture from their wild sanctuary. Thither our efforts were to be directed, not only on account of the good harvest in store, but also for the purpose of breaking up, if possible, that den of runaways which, if left unmolested, might in time become a serious obstacle in the way of reducing those wild herds to at least a partial submission.

The corrals, which I trust the patient reader has not forgotten we were in process of building, being now ready, we commenced preparations for a descent

upon the fierce hordes of that neglected section. Messengers were therefore despatched to the people of Caucagua, an adjacent cattle farm, apprising them of our intention, and with the dawn of day more than an hundred hunters were assembled on the spot. Among them were some of the best *enlazadores* that the country could produce, all of whom, like the valiant Pentapolin—chosen model of the hero of La Mancha—had his right arm bared to the shoulder that the wide sleeve of the Llanero shirt might not interfere with the management of the lazo.

As soon as the sun was high enough to light us through the bushes, a detachment of hunters penetrated the bristling maze of thorny acacias, and succeeded in driving out into the open savannas so large a herd of cattle that it soon swelled to a considerable *rodeo*. No sooner, however, did they discover the presence of the hunters, than becoming frantic they rushed from side to side like a band of furies, and, heedless of the shouts and goads of the horsemen, broke at length through the ring of even these experienced hunters, scattering again in all directions. In vain did the fearless pursuers throw themselves between the wild mass and the jungle; so rapid and entire was the dispersion that the plain which but now swarmed with the driven, bellowing, maddened creatures, was cleared as if by magic, leaving the disappointed hunters in sole possession. Only here and there a faint cloud of dust in the distance betrayed the course that some of the fugitives had taken. The men, enraged at this unexpected discomfiture, could not be restrained from again entering the tangled

labyrinth and dragging thence by sheer force a number of the refractory brutes. After deliberation, it was decided that several of the hunters should scour the plain in search of the runaways, while the larger number rushed again fearlessly into the jungle. These at last succeeded in securing several fierce bulls, each of which was treated *secundum artem*, depriving them of the chance of doing much mischief in future; for no sooner were they down, than the knife and the saw were busy with their horns, ears, &c. But the business was not accomplished without the usual average of casualties in these contests, and on that occasion one of our best hands was greatly imperilled. A ferocious bull was undergoing the usual precautionary, though severe measures, for his subjugation, when one of the men standing near, accidentally became entangled in the coils of the lazo at a moment when the bull, infuriated, escaped from those who held him. The poor fellow, although thrown violently to the ground and severely stunned, almost miraculously escaped further injury. The daring Sarmiento, one of those who witnessed the transaction, enraged at sight of his helpless companion, sprang from his horse, seized the sheep-skin which covered the saddle, and holding it before himself, fearlessly advanced sword in hand to meet the bull, which, not comprehending the challenge, stood panting and trembling with rage before his bold adversary. The matador perceiving this, approached him more closely and shook the sheep-skin in the animal's face; then, firm as a rock, he stood and dauntlessly awaited the coming struggle; it was

enough; with head lowered to the ground, and lashing himself furiously with his powerful tail, the bull rushed upon his antagonist with a terrific roar, causing every heart to tremble for the safety of the bold matador. Then we heard a heavy fall, a deep groan; we saw only a cloud of dust that concealed the scene; but we knew the Llanero had conquered. Triumphant shouts of approbation filled the air, whilst I knew not whether most to applaud the fearless grace with which the man had stood his ground before this, the most powerful of all infuriate creatures, or the dexterous celerity that had found, and with one fatal blow penetrated, the narrow passage through the vertebræ into the spinal marrow. But the scene in that remote corner of the earth recalled forcibly to my mind the spirited lines in which the author of Childe Harold thus depicts one of like nature in the midst of refined Europe:

"Foiled, bleeding, breathless, furious to the last,
Full in the centre stands the bull at bay
Mid wounds and clinging darts and lances brast,
And foes disabled in the brutal fray:
And now the matadors around him play,
Shake the red cloak, and poise the ready brand:
Once more through all he bursts his thundering way—
Vain rage! the mantle quits the conynge hand,
Wraps his fierce eye—'tis past—he sinks upon the sand!"

Those who had galloped off in search of the scattered herd finally returned, bringing a large addition to the stock, and we were driving them to the *paradero*, when our Leader's horse, a fiery charger of the

Goagiro breed,* little accustomed to the broken ground of the pampas, lost his footing and fell with him while endeavoring to clear an extensive *terro-nero*. Fortunately his rider received no injury; but loosing hold of the bridle in his fall, the horse was soon careering over the plain, and would inevitably have made good his escape, had not some vaqueros hunting in that direction encountered and captured him after a long race. Accidents of the kind are very common in the Llanos, and often in consequence many persons are killed or otherwise injured. The least evil to which the ousted rider may be subjected, is that of being left alone, perhaps with a dislocated limb, on an extensive plain, where the unfortunate may perish from hunger or exposure before assistance chances to reach him. Our friend B., who once found himself similarly circumstanced, related to us on this occasion the adventure, which he swore by all the saints in the calendar had actually occurred to him. Notwithstanding such exalted referees, a few grains of doubt still disturbed our belief.

"He was once," he said, "engaged in hunting with a party of vaqueros on the extensive savannas of Merecure, which form the great cajon or pampa between the rivers Cunaviche and Arauca. Having started in the morning with a full complement of men, there was no difficulty in forming the *rodeo;* but, as in our own case, all their manœuvres proved ineffectual in keeping together so great a number of untamed brutes, which finally broke through the

* Raised by a warlike tribe of Indians inhabiting the peninsula of La Goagira, on the Gulf of Maracaibo.

ranks as easily as might a herd of wild hogs through a field of reeds, and vanished in the distance. So great was the cloud of dust they raised, that when it cleared, B., whose horse during the confusion had stumbled in the hole of a prairie-owl, thrown, and then deserted him, found himself solus in the midst of the wide pampa, and so bewildered and confused by the general stampede, that he was totally unable to discover the least clew by which to guide his steps over those trackless wilds. Overcome with the fatigue of his useless search, he threw himself upon the ground, finally quite disheartened by the recollection that he had no lazo by which he would have been enabled at any time to secure sufficient animal food for his subsistence. Two whole days he thus passed hopelessly wandering and in search of food, when, upon the third, kind Providence, compassionating his sufferings, placed in his way a fat calf, which he succeeded in capturing after a short chase. Having slaughtered it, he roasted the whole at once lest it might spoil, then ravenously devoured the welcome repast. This supply lasted several days, when again finding himself minus food, he determined to put in practice a stratagem that he had devised whereby to secure for himself in future an unfailing supply of wholesome nourishment. He had observed the mother of the calf, apparently in search of her offspring, lingering in the neighborhood, moaning and bellowing in a most piteous manner. Availing himself of the first eligible opportunity, he approached her on all fours, entirely covered with the skin of her own calf, and forthwith commenced drawing suste-

nance from the maternal fount; this he accomplished with so much natural ease and grace, that the tender mother, after a few incredulous sniffs, felt convinced at last of his being a perfect calf, and accepting him for her own, bestowed upon him a good licking. Thus graciously encouraged, and each day more delighted with the unrestrained freedom of his new life, time rolled on and a year elapsed without his ever regretting the loss of home or friends; while so powerful was the effect of this novel mode of existence upon his person, that it had materially altered his whole appearance, and as the calf skin seemed to have actually adhered to his own, so he found himself rapidly assimilating, as well in tastes as habits, to that interesting quadruped.

About this period the majordomo undertook another hunt on these plains, where he quickly succeeded in collecting a large number of cattle; but although they were all, as usual, extremely difficult to manage, still there was one of the number, a young bull with a fine pair of horns twelve inches long, more refractory and troublesome than any of the others, which fact—as B. was the bull—was owing probably to his educated instincts, they enabling him to devise a variety of expedients for the discomfiture of his pursuers. However he was at length obliged to yield to superior numbers, and the unerring lazo finally brought him struggling to the ground, when in an instant one of his captors, an athletic sambo, had drawn his knife and commenced sharpening it upon the horns of this novel minotaurus, preparatory to performing upon him the usual necessary oper-

ations. But what language can do justice to the astonishment of all beholders, when the apparent bull, casting aside his hairy disguise, sprang erect from the ground, exclaiming as he did so: "Stop, *amigos!* can you have forgotten your old comrade B., who was lost a year ago in this *cimarronera?*"

So perilous an adventure having convinced him of the risks attending a savage life, his companions had no difficulty in persuading him to return home with them, and thereafter found him of immense assistance in their expeditions, as, being perfectly familiar with the haunts and habits of the cattle in that cover, he could lead the vaqueros, when required, with the sagacity of a pointer.

This story, which B. related with the most admirable ingenuousness of manner, recalled to his recollection a wonderful discovery upon which he had chanced, while journeying on a pressing errand to Arauca.

He had been riding hard all day across the plains, until at length, overtaken by night, he was constrained to encamp on the spot. Grass and water for his horse—a fine trotter—being abundant and at hand, he took no precaution to prevent his straying, other than that of fastening the animal's feet on the right side with a *manea*, a strap with looped nooses at both ends. In spite of this the horse wandered from him during the night, a mishap which compelled poor B. to finish the remainder of the journey on foot, besides being obliged to carry the ponderous saddle upon his head.

Having accomplished his errand at Arauca, and after an absence of several weeks, he was returning

home by another route, riding a hired animal, when to his great joy, on the way he found his steed in fine condition, and his feet still secured by the strap. The horse he was riding being already tired, he removed the saddle to the back of his own steed, and immediately mounted him. But to his overpowering astonishment, he discovered, on resuming the journey, that the gait of his horse had undergone an extraordinary change, trotting as formerly on the side that had remained free from the strap, but ambling on the one which had been so long confined by it. His wife possessing an ambler, he sold it immediately he reached home, it being thereafter a useless expense, as, whenever in the future he and his better half wished to ride at the same time, all that he had to do was to place her on the ambling side, and then seating himself on the other they trotted and ambled away to their hearts' content.

The nights were thus pleasantly spent, after the fatigues of the day, most of our men having always some incident or story to relate in connection with their own experience. One evening, Gaspar, the lame negro who followed our camp in the humble capacity of washerman, recounted to a circle of admiring listeners a thrilling adventure which took place on this very spot, and in which he took a very conspicuous part. He had been a slave to the wealthy Manuel Blanco, who owned at that time nearly all these savannas, and possessed in consequence untold wealth in cattle and horses. In that capacity Gaspar was often compelled to attend the great hunts undertaken by his master against any *tigre cebado* that might have committed depredations in the land.

THE JAGUAR HUNT.

"It was during the month of August," said Gaspar, "when the savannas are at the height of inundation, that the circumstances I am about to relate occurred at this farm of Matiyure. At such times the tigers, finding the low lands rather too damp for their delicate feet, seek refuge among the *matas*, or in the immediate vicinity of the farm-house, coming out at night to procure a good supper for themselves and cubs from amongst the herds congregated on the *bancos*, and not unfrequently it happens they carry their depredations to the very gates of the *majada*.

"We had heard for several nights in succession what, in the opinion of our people, was only the bellowing of *padrotes* assembling their herds, but which the more sagacious hounds recognized at once as the roar of their old acquaintance, the tiger, invariably answering each time with a prolonged and dismal howl. It was easy to perceive, from the prints left in the mud, that there were several of these animals, perhaps a mother and her cubs. One fine morning the boys who tended the calves apprised the majordomo that some wild beast had broken into the *chiquero*,* and carried off the old sow, about giving birth to a litter; next day the boar was missing, and so on until the *chiquero* was entirely relieved of all the inmates. Fearing for our own lives and the safety of

* The pig-pen.

our steeds, the majordomo made arrangements for a grand hunt, for the purpose of exterminating, if possible, the whole of these marauders. Our master, who was at that time in the village, was notified of the plan, as were also all those who might wish to improve this opportunity for the display of personal prowess.

"The following day we had the satisfaction of seeing our master arrive at the farm, accompanied by the *Padre* and a long retinue of assistants, all of them zambos of undoubted courage and most accomplished matadors. The *Padre*, a fat little gentleman not yet past the prime of life, came more as a *curioso* * than, as many supposed, to exorcise the demons of the jungle. Although he had the reputation of being a very holy father, he did not disdain at times to lay aside the cassock and join his parishioners in the manly sport of the Llanos.

"We mustered about forty in all, which, together with a dozen or more tiger-dogs, were considered quite sufficient for our purpose. Some of the men carried lances cut to within six feet of the steel head, so that the long shaft might not interfere with their movements in the jungle; whilst others, trusting more to their own agility and skill, were simply armed with their swords and a *saleo* † to cover their movements. I, who was neither a matador nor a great horseman at the time, was intrusted with the hazardous post of leading the dogs into the cover, and therefore was more exposed than any of the rest to the anger of the tiger.

* Amateur. † Sheep-skin.

"We were not long in tracking the *pintado* to a neighboring *mata* by the fresh prints of his paw in the soft mud and by a number of turkey-buzzards hovering above the carcass in the woods.

"On arriving at the place supposed to harbor the beast, all those of our men who had lazos were stationed at convenient distances around the wood, while I was ordered to lead the dogs into the jungle after the concealed enemy. This I accomplished with due precautions, aware, as you all know, that the *pintado* has the peculiarity of concealing himself where not even a fox could hide itself without being discovered. Presently I perceived a very strong smell—not unlike that arising from a leather vat—which filled the air in whatever direction the dogs led me, and soon after a tremendous howling from these worthies apprised me in whose company they had thrust me. Simultaneously with the howling of the dogs, I heard first a hoarse growling, not unlike a concert of *araguatos* just before the rain, and, judging from the increased barking of the hounds, I concluded that the enemy was in full retreat, when I thought my time had come to show him my mettle. But lo! scarcely had I advanced many paces, when, *Ave Maria, Señores!* the tiger gave such a fearful roar as to shake the ground and the trees upon it. I do not know what became of the dogs or the tiger at the moment; for my part, all I can say is, that, without being aware of it, I found myself again alongside of my companions, and, what was worse, in the presence of the majordomo, who, by way of warning, discharged upon

my ribs sundry blows with his *chaparro.* It is needless to add, that after this I considered myself ten times better off amidst my hounds, whom I had every reason to expect would keep away the beast from me, I mean, of course, the tiger. Upon my word, *camaradas*, and with all due respect to *mi Comandante* Rávago, here present, I assure you that, of all savage creatures, there is none so terrible as an angry majordomo."

"Thou didst find it so," retorted the weather-beaten overseer, "when, amidst a shower of bullets from the Spaniards, I dragged thee out like a lame duck from the plaza at La Cruz; but proceed, my old buzzard, and tell us what effect did the well-deserved thrashing produce on thy sooty hide."

"Guided by the barking of the dogs, I again entered the wood with renewed determination, for this time, at least, I was well provided with a lance, which some humane companion placed in my hands, besides a *saleo* which I picked up on my way thither. Thus armed and prepared for the encounter, I fancied myself this time another Marcelino, slaying everything around me; but how I acquitted myself afterwards the sequel of my narrative will show you.

"Well, *Señores*, I found *Tio Tigre* * at the foot of a large algarroba-tree, surrounded by my dogs, whose movements he watched all the time with an evil eye. To all appearances none of the contending parties had yet come to any decisive move, although the

* For explanation, see page 231.

hounds kept very closely on him. Cat-like, seated on his haunches and playfully moving his tail from side to side, he awaited the attack of the barking troop with becoming composure, never betraying the least symptom of alarm, nor even deigning to stir a foot beyond his post to silence them. At times he even appeared to disregard their menacing tone, rubbing his eyes with his great paws as if doubtful which of my fat hounds would afford him the best meal. Occasionally he licked his thick upper lip with his fiery tongue, as if savoring beforehand the unexpected morsel thus brought before him. Finally one of the dogs, which appeared more courageous than the rest, made a sudden spring at his side, when I thought my time had come to plunge my lance into his vitals. But before I could measure the distance that separated me from the enemy, I had the mortification to see my brave companion stretched lifeless on the ground. This, I thought, was a bad beginning; but if ever I have a chance at thy dirty skin (said I to the villain), I am going to dye it of a different hue.

"My dogs, however, were not to be intimidated so easily after this unexpected discomfiture: on the contrary, growing more and more clamorous all the time for the fate of their companion, they seemed determined on avenging his death by renewing their attacks upon the enemy. The tiger, however, conscious, no doubt, of the fate that awaited him beyond his lair, obstinately refused to be driven out like a polecat, but adhered firmly to his entrenchment at the foot of the tree.

"Now, there was among my pack of hounds a splendid fellow which had always been a particular favorite of mine, not only on account of his superior strength in dealing with refractory bulls, but also for his friendly attachment to my person, which he had displayed more especially whenever the majordomo showed himself overzealous on behalf of my master by an undue punishment on me. Observing that the tiger still persisted in maintaining his position, I said to Fierabras—for such was my favorite's name—Now then, my boy, show him your teeth! while I advanced two or three steps with the intention of pinning the animal with my lance to the body of the tree. But alas! vain attempt: with one stroke from his huge paw, the tiger snatched the lance from my hands, and laid me flat on the ground, inflicting at the same time the severe gash on my neck that you may still observe. But that is not all; as the scoundrel, disregarding all the rules of decency and politeness, very coolly sat himself upon my face, nearly suffocating me with the weight of his body and the strong exhalations arising from it. I thought that if I could get at my *cuchillo*, which I carried by my side, I would soon get the pride out of him; but in the situation I then was, it would have been impossible and even hazardous to attempt anything of the kind. Fortunately the tiger, like his near relative, the cat, seldom worries his victims as long as they keep perfectly still. By this time some of my friends outside —not hearing the loud whoops by which I encouraged the dogs, and fearing something serious might have

happened to me—hastened to the spot from whence proceeded the barking of the dogs, and endeavored to rescue me from my perilous situation. The tangled nature of the wood, however, not permitting the men to use their lazos, one of my companions—a slave, like myself, and a most daring matador—resolved to attack the tiger with his sword. Seizing the sheep-skin from the seat of his saddle, and partly rolling it on his left arm, he advanced boldly upon the tiger, and, with a voice that I shall never forget, he cried out: 'Now, then, *hijo 'una put* . . . . you don't know who Paulino Blanco is, or else you would not be making faces at me there as if you were a monkey.' The tiger, who most likely had, during his nocturnal visits to the farm-house, heard something about the famous matador, very wisely disregarded the insult flung at him, instead of rushing on to his encounter like a mad bull. This somewhat disconcerted the plans of the matador, who was also aware of the danger of attacking the beast in his intrenchment; but finally losing all manner of patience, Paulino made a rush on the tiger, not stopping until he almost touched the animal's nose with the sheep-skin; then plunging his sword in the neck of his antagonist, both fell rolling on the ground, cracking the brushwood as they struggled. In the meantime I was not slow in improving the opportunity to crawl out in search of my lost lance, which I soon found, and was enabled by means of it to return the service rendered by my companion. To plunge the lance into the beast's heart and turn him on his side, was the work of a moment, after which the tiger

gradually relaxed his hold upon my prostrate companion, and stretched himself out to die without a groan, but not before he had inflicted several deep wounds on the neck and chest of his antagonist. Thus ended the career of that scourge of the savannas; and my first experience in tiger-hunting.

"After this adventure it was easy to perceive that chasing the tiger on his own ground was not an easy task by any means. Therefore our people were induced to proceed more cautiously in the subsequent search that was made for the others.

"It was not long before the dogs, which were by this time aroused to a sense of revenge and self-defence, fell in with the track of another tiger, probably the wife of the defunct, as it was evident from the foot-prints that she was followed by two younger ones. Fearing from past experience that this second hunt might also prove as disastrous as the former, it was agreed that all those who carried lances should enter the wood on foot in order to attack the tigress in a body, should she refuse to come out to open ground. I, of course, was too faint with loss of blood to be able to follow up the trail this time; therefore the dogs had been placed under the guidance of some one else, and shortly after I had the satisfaction of hearing the bark of my chaps resounding through the woods, which was a sure sign they had brought the game to a stand. I was expecting every moment to hear the glad tidings of the destruction of this female marauder, when, instead of the usual cry of victory, I heard a tremendous rush and cracking of sticks, as if

a herd of wild hogs were endeavoring to escape. Judge of my disappointment when I beheld the whole troop of men and dogs hurrying out of the wood ; and at the head of the fugitives no less a personage than his Reverence the Padre, hotly chased by the enraged tigress, who, having witnessed the slaughter in cold blood of one of her darlings, could not restrain her fury any longer, charging headlong into the midst of the group. In spite of his category, she would in all probability have made short work of *Su Señoria*, had not the Padre conceived the good idea of dropping his broad-brim behind him, which fortunately was carried away by a strong gust of wind, thus exciting the enraged beast to a pursuit. The tigress, after sporting with the hat like a bird after a butterfly, finding that it was mere chaff, tore it in pieces, and again turned her attention towards the reverend fugitive. In the meantime the Padre had not been very slow in reaching his horse, which was tied at the foot of a caujaro-tree a short distance from the wood. Unfortunately, just as he was in the act of laying hands upon the bridle of his steed, the tigress issued from amongst the high grass, and again charged him. At sight of the dreaded beast, the horse, giving a toss to the halter in the air, broke loose and scampered off, leaving his master to the tender mercies of the tigress.

"Swifter than a monkey, and in spite of his ponderous stomach, the Padre went up the slender tree, which bent like a reed at every effort he made to reach the branches, threatening to drop him between the open jaws of the tigress, which by this time had

reached the foot of the tree. Here, again, his patron saint, as it is alleged, saved him once more from the impending danger. The truth, in my opinion, is that the tree was not stout enough for the tigress to embrace it firmly to climb up, otherwise all the good saints in heaven would not have prevented her from tearing him down like a frightened *araguato*.* His Reverence might have remained there until the day of judgment, as the tigress had already crouched beneath the tree, and he had no means at hand for driving her off, not even through the power of excommunication, but for the timely arrival of two *enlazadores*,† who, observing a horse scampering over the plain without a rider, were attracted to the spot; these, unfolding their lazos, threw them at the beast with such precision as to entangle the animal at one and the same moment; she was thus prevented from doing injury to either the Padre or themselves; for, every time she endeavored to spring on the one, the other tighted his lazo to check her movement. Furious with rage and foaming at the mouth, the tigress endeavored to bite the lazos through and through; but finding the hide from which the thong was twisted rather too tough even for her powerful tusks, she rolled over the grass in trepidation and dismay at finding herself so unexpectedly in the power of her captors.

"It was a glorious sight to behold the savage creature thus struggling with the slender lazos that bound

* Howling monkey.

† Horsemen furnished with lazos.

her to the ground. Crippled as I was from the effects of my first encounter with the tiger, I had sufficient strength to reach the scene of action in time to take part in the death of his wife also ; but ere I dealt the first blow at her, I felt my arm suddenly arrested by the Padre, who contended that the honor of putting an end to her accursed existence belonged to him exclusively as being the aggrieved party on this occasion. I therefore willingly surrendered my lance to him, he having lost his own spear in the hurry of the moment ; and then he set to work cutting her up with all the nicety of us folks, as if he had long been trained in the art of wielding a lance. Nevertheless, the tigress would not allow herself to be so easily conquered ; at every stroke from the Padre's lance, she seized the pole with teeth and claws so firmly that we found it difficult to wrench it from her grasp, and it was not until she had been literally cut to pieces that she gave up the ghost—to the devil, I hope.

"It was late in the afternoon when we finished our hunt, and turned our horses' heads in the direction of the farm-house. We should, no doubt, have succeeded in killing as many more of these ferocious beasts, but for the early mishap to myself and the good zambo Paulino, in consequence of which we both had to be carried—or, rather, we carried ourselves as well as we could—to the *pueblo*, in order to have our wounds properly dressed. On our arrival at the house, we found our mistress—who had already been acquainted with the facts by my master—awaiting us at the gate of the inclosure, and apparently very much excited

with the news; for no sooner did Paulino pass the gate, and without waiting for him to dismount from his horse, than she accosted my companion in the following manner: 'Well, Paulino, my boy, I declare . . . . . now tell me, how did the tiger scratch you, my poor fellow, and what did you do to the scoundrel?' with other similar expressions of feminine curiosity. Paulino, who was more matter of fact than we poor slave folks have generally the credit for, very prudently hesitated at first to comply with the train of her requests, excusing himself by saying, 'Alas! mistress, it was a hard case, indeed; but, to tell you the truth, I shouldn't like to show you how.'

"This reluctance on the part of my companion only helped to excite her curiosity still more, until she commanded him, in a peremptory manner, to explain to her the circumstances of the case. By this time Paulino had, with some difficulty, extricated himself from the saddle, and falling suddenly upon our mistress with a loud yell, he threw her upon the ground and commenced biting and scratching her just as the tiger had done to him. The yell from zambo and the shrieks from *mi Señora* soon drew to the spot my master, and some gentlemen who had come to congratulate him on the success of the hunt. Frantic with passion, and in a tone of voice which made me tremble for poor Paulino, he roared out, 'How, now! Who's taking such liberties with my wife, here!' To which Paulino very calmly replied, ''Tis nothing, master; I was only showing mistress how the tiger scratched me!' . . . ."

CHAPTER XXII.

LOS BORALES.

Aware of the importance of a plentiful supply of water for the cattle during the season of drought, we resolved to build a large reservoir in the heart of the savannas before leaving the pampas, and with this object now turned our steps toward the lagoon of Los Borales—so named in honor of a species of water lily very abundant on its borders—which, although quite a lake during the rainy season, often lost its waters by evaporation and other causes when most needed. This required a dam to be raised across one of the many creeks traversing these plains in all directions, to arrest the flow when the floods begin ebbing, thus leaving an artificial reservoir where previously only an extensive bog existed. We installed ourselves within the shelter of a solitary grove, and immediately commenced raising an embankment to several feet above the level of the plain, taking the earth for the purpose from the bed of a creek connecting with the lagoon. Digging to the depth of twelve feet, we came upon a tree with trunk and branches in perfect

preservation, which, although it had evidently been thus entombed for ages, a breath of air had power to crumble into dust. As from the time of our arrival it had rained unceasingly, the water rapidly accumulated in the now completed reservoir, though our satisfaction received something of a damper from the fact that the fires were thereby constantly extinguished, until we bethought ourselves of erecting over them a covering of green boughs about three feet from the ground. Upon this we laid large pieces of meat, which, covered with palm leaves, were speedily cooked by the fire beneath.

In that retired and solitary grove, seated on a pack-saddle, and surrounded by lazos, bridles, and other emblems of our peaceful occupation, I wrote under the dictation of our Leader, his emphatic refusal to accept the Presidency of the Republic for a third time. Little did we then dream that this spontaneous act of political abnegation would be hailed with exultation by his enemies, in the hope of working, as it did for a time, his ruin as well as that of the Republic; and that the same plains where occurred this disinterested proof of patriotism, should shortly afterward witness a scene of bloodshed and persecution to him who, not long before, had been the acknowledged guardian of his country's liberties.

Thunder storms were now of frequent occurrence. One night we were awakened by a fearful clap from the approaching tempest. The prospect was not inviting. Sheltered in our hammocks only by our *toldos*, and raising among us all but a very small umbrella of philosophy, we awaited the coming storm.

In a moment it was upon us with a raging wind that threatened to overthrow and crush us beneath the falling branches of the trees. Then from the heavens descended so continuous a sheet of commingled fire and flood, that these at last appeared to become a part of the atmosphere we breathed. Terrified by this fearful uproar, our *madrina* of supernumerary horses, which, fearing the snakes, we had quartered in the bed of a dried-up lagoon, dashed madly across the plain, in spite of the combined efforts of their keepers. But no sooner had these refractory animals abandoned the secure pastures for the high grounds, than, attacked by snakes, three of them paid with their lives their insubordination, and one of these unfortunates was afterward brought staggering into the camp, groaning piteously. Unable in the darkness to discover the cause of his sufferings, a light was speedily procured by igniting a rag rolled in fat, when a most revolting spectacle presented itself; the poor beast, so covered with blood that he appeared literally to have been plunged into a bath of gore, had evidently been bitten by a snake, possibly the same which in killing the others had probably nearly exhausted its poison upon them, so that what remained of the venom had not power to produce immediate death, but effected a complete diapedesis or transudation of the blood. A *curandero* present undertook to restore the poor animal by means of the famous *oracion*, but on this occasion his skill was vain—the horse in a short time expiring, apparently in great agony. The groans of the dying animal, the thundering of the others along the waste, the shouts

and curses of their pursuers, who in the darkness were in danger of being trampled under the feet of more than three hundred frightened animals, mingled with the appalling fury of the elements, until it seemed as though earth and heaven were struggling for the mastery. This fearful scene oh, my unhappy country! shadowed forth but too faithfully thy dark night of despotism; the anarchy, contentions, and wretchedness of thy children; thy ravaged borders, where the "Wise and Good" had formerly scattered plenty over the smiling land, and portrays now to me as faithfully the night when I, with a handful of brave youths from Maracaibo, was surprised upon the borders of its lake by the myrmidons of the tyrant Monagas, and carried prisoners to the capital while endeavoring to save the remnant of constitutional liberty in the republic.

Our men, finding it impossible during the darkness to trace the horses—among them all of those used for the saddle—were obliged to postpone their search until sunrise. At length, as if wearied with its wild orgies, this tumultuous night passed away, and the morning star appeared leading the timid dawn. The earth, so late the dark abode of chaos, now in bloom and beauty, seemed the favored daughter of the spheres, sparkling in liquid gems, and radiant in the gorgeous splendor of tropical spring, while myriads of white lilies, far as eye could reach, mantled the plain, flooding with perfume the pure morning air. Countless flocks of waterfowl, from the tiny *güiriri* to the soldier-like crane of the pampas, crowded the

miniature lakes, which the late storm had left in every hollow of the ground, and made the air resound with their harsh and varied notes. Conspicuous among these last were the several species of *garzas*—herons—those "Ladies of the waters, delicate in form, beautiful in plumage, and graceful in their movements," whose slender, arching necks, curving here and there above and through the sprouting grass, reminded one of the deadly snakes lurking about the plain. There, too, the *carrao*, a bird less prepossessing in appearance, but endowed with keen perception of a coming change of weather, announced by loud cries, from which it derives its name, the near approach of rain with singular precision. Clouds of fluttering *gaviotas* or scissor-beaks (Rhynchops) skimmed the water in wild, irregular flight, ploughing up the smaller fish with their scissor-like beaks, and vexing the ear with harsh and piercing cries. On all sides bellowing herds of cattle and troops of emaciated deer wandered, panting as they sought for water and fresh food; while, rescued from the torpor into which the protracted summer drought had plunged them, the drowsy crocodiles and sluggish tortoises moved slowly over the plain in search of the reviving element.

It was no easy task to keep the fires burning after the deluging showers of the previous night, in consequence of which we were threatened for a while with starvation in the midst of plenty, as not only had our temporary kitchen been destroyed, but every log of wood was drenched with water; so were also our scanty garments and ponchos, most of them being

likewise in a few hours covered with the larvæ of myriads of flies which infested our camp. These *petites misères* were, however, forgotten for the moment in the all-absorbing topic of the whereabouts of our runaway horses. Happily the Llaneros, accustomed from their infancy to observe the instincts of the animals surrounding them, possess a sort of intuitive knowledge—with them it might be called a science—of their movements and impulses.

In following the trail of stray animals amidst thousands intercepting each other in every direction, it is of course necessary to determine the right one in order to prosecute the search with some degree of success. The long experience and sagacity of our sturdy majordomo, whose word was considered infallible in such matters, were of incalculable advantage on this occasion. Calmly seated on his hammock, his weather-beaten countenance turned toward the far horizon, he assembled around him the wearied watchmen of the missing drove, still drenched by the late tempest; and directing each squad as to the probable course followed by the separate groups of horses, he ordered them to disperse over the plain in pursuit of their uncertain errand. As the subsequent results proved, on the afternoon of the following day, it was executed with gratifying punctuality; and here I may be permitted to utter a passing word of praise in behalf of these hardy cavaliers of the desert plains, upon whose courage and sagacity often depends, not only the success of such expeditions, but sometimes even the fate of a whole army, whose progress would be seriously endangered without a com-

petent body of cavalry to procure the necessary supply of beef. Scantily provided with raiment, poorly paid, and the simple fare of the Llanos for rations, they are at the post of duty at all hours, in the hot sunshine of day, or "in thunder, in lightning, and in rain" by night, always cheerful and happy, providing they have with them their inharmonious guitar and plenty of tobacco with which to satisfy their appetite for stimulus of some sort. Among the various duties of their vocation, one of the hardest to which they are subjected is that of keeping a constant watch over the cattle at night to prevent their dispersion, as they are compelled to remain for hours on horseback and "wide awake." In order to accustom the cattle to the voice of their nocturnal guardians, a constant chant in a peculiarly plaintive strain, in which cattle seem rather to delight, is kept up until morning, when only a few horsemen are necessary to retain them within the grazing ground. Should the unruly herd, despite their vigilance, take alarm, as is often the case, or evince any symptoms of uneasiness, the first care of the men is to close in, in circle, and if this prove unavailing, they place themselves at the head of the stampede, in order to check, if possible, the progress of the affrighted multitude; but woe to the unfortunate watchman whose horse, missing his footing, throws his rider, for he will be trampled to death in an instant!

One afternoon we were apprised by a special messenger from El Frio, that a tall, red-faced Englishman had arrived from the Orinoco, bringing any quantity

of fire-arms, ammunition, and—what appeared most extraordinary to our informant—a genuine negro servant who could speak English. As no written communication had been despatched along with the bearer of this unexpected piece of intelligence, we had not an idea of who this British Nimrod might be. We, however, hastened to welcome the stranger, and for the purpose left Los Borales next morning for head-quarters. On arriving, we were most agreeably surprised at meeting no less a personage than Lord James Butler, now, as I understand, Earl of Ormond. We then recollected that the previous year, when his lordship had honored us with a visit at our home in the valleys of Aragua, he had promised that should we carry out our projected expedition to the pampas, he would meet us there. Accordingly, in expectation of this, he had quitted Barbadoes—where he was stationed with his regiment—in his yacht for the river Orinoco. There he left it and prosecuted the remainder of the voyage in a clumsy bongo, up the Apure, arriving at San Fernando nearly a month after quitting Ciudad Bolivar. At the former place he was advised to proceed to Achaguas, where he would most likely hear of our whereabouts. Obtaining there the requisite information, he immediately set out for our cattle farm, distant about fifteen leagues; but instead of providing him with a guide across the trackless waste, he was merely furnished with a refractory mule, which they assured him would take him to the next cattle farm, whence he would be directed onward. He had not proceeded far on his solitary way, when the vicious animal, taking fright

at a prairie-owl just as night was approaching, suddenly whirled round, and my lord, despite his long legs and English horsemanship, lost his balance, was dismounted, and, what was worse, left to shift for himself in the midst of a wide plain; the mule, finding, perhaps, the load rather too much for him, scampering off without even a parting compliment. Nor was his sable squire at hand to render him the requisite assistance, as he had been left behind in charge of the numberless accoutrements for the chase. Fortunately a peon accidentally encountered the mule on his way home, and knowing the tricks of the animal, secured him, and brought him back to the discomfited traveller.

His lordship related this adventure with much humor, and on our expressing regret that he had met with so disagreeable a *contretemps*, he coolly replied that he scarcely considered it in that light, and rather regretted its speedy termination as having, possibly, deprived him of some curious experiences.

Although the best room in the house had been prepared for his accommodation, we observed with surprise that when night came, he insisted upon having his hammock slung in the open air. This, we afterward discovered, was in consequence of his great horror for the *murcielagos* clinging in clusters to the thatch-roof of the house; and I must confess also that the guest-chamber in our Manor of the Pampas had few attractions, and could offer none of the allurements of the *dulce domo* to his lordship of Kilkenny Castle. Wines or delicacies of any kind we had none; but as we were well aware that the hospitable

Englishman always offers some choicer beverage than water to his guests, we caused an old corozo-palm tree standing in front of the house to be cut down, and from it we procured every afternoon a plentiful supply of palm-wine. To obtain this, a trough is scooped out in the upper part of the stem among the footstalks of the leaves; the opening is then covered with the square piece of bark just cut out, and the wine or sap allowed to accumulate in the trough during the night. A few hours are sufficient to produce a pleasant vinous fermentation with a sweetish taste and a flavor similar to that of Malaga wine; but if left to ferment for a longer period, it acquires decidedly intoxicating properties.

Although our sports were nearly over at this time, we endeavored to entertain our distinguished visitor as well as circumstances would permit. We escorted him several times to the savannas in search of game, and even got up a *rodeo* and branding frolic for his special amusement, with both of which he appeared highly delighted. During the excitement of the *rodeo* he had another adventure, similar to that I have already related as having occurred to my friend, Mr. Thomas, with a wild bull, and which came very near proving more disastrous than his lordship's previous one with the refractory mule. We had just surrounded a large herd of cattle, when, like the artist, inspired by the excitement of the chase and its accompanying scenes, Lord James seized his sketch-book and commenced to delineate them. He had not been long thus occupied, when a bull, attracted perhaps by the commanding attitude of the draughts-

man, broke through the ring, and made at him with fury in his eyes. Unconscious of danger, he continued his occupation with as much composure as if at a stag-hunt in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It was too late to render him assistance, and we watched the issue with breathless anxiety; but the bull, apparently awed by the immovable attitude of the rider and his fearless composure, contented himself with making a tremendous demonstration at the breast of the horse without either touching him or his rider, and then, turning tail, vanished in the distance. It was highly amusing to hear his lordship inquire the meaning of all that flourish of trumpets, when a witty Llanero, standing near, replied to him that it was evidently intended as a salutation from the wild multitude to the honored guest.

Startled by the noise and rush of so many animals over the plain, the foxes—in the pursuit of which Englishmen are so lavish of trouble and expense—could be seen running to and fro, endeavoring to escape; no sooner did the noble son of Albion discover that this favorite game was also to be found in the pampas, than he abandoned the exciting hunt of the wild cattle for the first fox that crossed his path. He had not proceeded far, however, when another fox, and then another, and finally a legion of them offered to his eager pursuit. Bewildered by so many bushy tails, he gave up the chase in disgust; and I am sorry to state that this species of *embarras de richesse*, spoiled sport for him in all his subsequent sorties, excepting when, on a visit to the creek of Macanillal, we "caught a tartar" in the shape of a full-grown

crocodile, which we mistook for a young one. This adventure, however, afforded him a good deal of amusement, and some surprise to those engaged in the undertaking. It so happened that only the end of the reptile's tail was out of water in a very shallow spot, the rest of its body being entirely buried among the roots of a large stump. Judging from the apparent smallness of the tail that we could easily drag out the creature, and his lordship having expressed a desire to obtain the specimen for preservation, Roseliano immediately volunteered his services. He tried in vain, however, to bring it to light unassisted, whereupon a lazo was brought into requisition, and having noosed the tail therewith, we succeeded in pulling the reptile out of its hiding-place, when, to our great astonishment and trepidation, we discovered that it was a large and full-grown female crocodile with a brood of young ones among the roots of the old tree. She struggled furiously in defence of her brood, several of which we captured and presented to our guest; but when the time came for disposing of the mother and recovering the lazo, we found that it would prove no child's play, inasmuch as she had full command of her jaws. After several ineffectual attempts to stab her while in water, we succeeded at length in dragging her partly from her lair, and then only were we enabled to unfasten the noose. A stab or two in the armpits, causing a flow of blood, speedily brought the caribes to finish the job, after which we returned to the house, much gratified at having rid the creek of this dangerous family.

On our way back I met with a severe accident,

and narrowly escaped serious injury from it. We were cantering along a beautifully level piece of ground, covered with short grass; this suggested to my English friends the idea of testing the relative swiftness of our horses. Off we at once started, and had proceeded but a short distance, when we found our way obstructed by a dried-up creek. The Englishmen, as a matter of course, delighted, leaped it at a bound; but my pony, not being sufficiently strong to clear the obstruction, missed the opposite bank and fell, rolling over with me into the ditch. I was a good deal bruised in consequence, and the house being still at considerable distance, suffered intensely in reaching it. This accident prevented me from joining in the other sports devised for the entertainment of our noble guest, who, however shortly afterward bade us adieu and returned to the sea coast. He preferred, on this occasion, the route through Nutrias and Barinas, that he might escape the tedious descent of the rivers; a messenger was therefore despatched to Ciudad Bolivar, ordering his yacht to meet him at Puerto Cabello. Disabled by my recent mishap, I could not, much to my regret, accompany him; a guide of his own selection was, however, furnished in the person of our negro troubadour Quintana, for whom his lordship had evinced a decided predilection, even extending to him an invitation to visit "Old England," the friend and protector of benighted Africa; but we could not spare him for so long a trip; and as Llaneros have an innate aversion to trusting themselves on unknown waters, the acquaintanceship terminated on the borders of the Caribbean Sea.

After the departure of our noble guest from El Frio, we began to think that it was also high time for us to be getting ready for our return homeward. The task of retracing our steps, however, was not an easy thing to accomplish with three thousand oxen to look after, besides the other animals we brought there; and this in the face of the approaching inundation of the savannas.

As soon as our preparations were completed, we took our final departure from El Frio, which perhaps we were destined never to revisit, stopping at San Pablo for a few days to make further arrangements at the pass for crossing the river with our immense train of animals and baggage. On our way to San Pablo, we were nigh being put to rout, and our labors scattered to the winds, by an invasion of a small bloody fly termed *mosquilla*, which makes its appearance at the commencement of the rainy season, and which, for destructiveness to flesh and blood, surpasses any thing I have yet seen in the shape of an insect. In an instant we were enveloped in a swarm of these terrible creatures, which fastened themselves upon us and the cattle with a tenacity like that of hungry leeches, maddening both man and beast, and causing streams of blood to flow from the bites. The only relief we found for a while was to drive the cattle at full speed across the plain; but this expedient, although for the time it frightened away the flies, came very near producing also a complete dispersion of the herd. We therefore resigned ourselves to endure their torturing attacks until they had gorged themselves with blood.

OUR LEADER.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OUR LEADER.

THE ROMANCE OF A PATRIOT'S LIFE.

From San Pablo we despatched men on to Apurito, where we proposed crossing the river with the cattle, to make preparations for this toilsome work; and then started for Achaguas, the inhabitants of which town had tendered our Leader an earnest invitation to visit his old head-quarters. After an easy ride of about three hours, we forded on horseback the arm of the Apure River which, running in a south-easterly direction, forms with the Arauca and the main channel of the former the island of Achaguas, on which the capital of the province, a collection of mud hovels, is situated. A brood of scaly crocodiles basking in the sun, and a herd of tame cattle refreshing themselves in the middle of the stream, were the only signs of animation we perceived on our approach to the renowned capital of the Apure. In spite of its present dilapidated condition, Achaguas did not fail to interest me more than any other spot in Apure, being my birthplace, and the stronghold for many years of my country's independence. The Governor

of the province, Señor Arciniega, accompanied by the few officials in the place, came out after a while to greet our Leader, as did also the veteran General Cornelio Muñoz, former Commander of the famous *Guardia de Honor*, or *Colorados de Paez*, which under the leadership of both these generals, performed so many prodigies during the long struggle between Royalists and Patriots, which resulted in the final overthrow of Spanish domination in Colombia. At that epoch of historical interest to the friends of liberty in America, Achaguas held the most conspicuous position as the headquarters of the patriot armies, led by the subject of the following remarks.

The arms of the republic were at first unsuccessful, and Venezuela submitted to the government of the mother country, the Spanish commander, Don Domingo Monteverde, having triumphed over the patriot forces in 1812. By this time, however, a new champion of the republican cause was rising in the south, amidst the wild scenes I have endeavored to depict in the foregoing pages. This champion was Captain José A. Paez, then a youth of twenty Aprils, who conceived the happy idea of collecting a horde of undisciplined Llaneros in the plains of Casanare to oppose the overwhelming forces of Spain. His intimate acquaintance with the country, and his thorough mastery in all the sports of the Llaneros, admirably fitted him to carry out his plans successfully. How he came there, and by what means he acquired the requisite proficiency for the arduous enterprise, the following anecdote of his early career will explain.

When seventeen years of age, an uncle of his, the good Priest of Araure, his native place, entrusted him with a large sum of money to deliver safely into the hands of the curate of a distant parish, furnishing him for the journey with a mule, an old pistol, and a rusty sword; for, even at that period of comparative quiet and peace (1807) it was dangerous for a traveller to venture over the roads alone, and carrying with him the tempting metal. The future President of the Republic, highly elated at the great confidence reposed in him, with the usual inexperience of youth, spoke freely about his commission in the first inn he stopped at to get his meals. The consequence of this imprudence was, that shortly after he left the inn, he was attacked on the road by three men, who, as a matter of course, demanded *la bolsa ó la vida.* The youthful traveller, however, dismounted with the old pistol in his hand already cocked, and now threatening one and then the other of his assailants, endeavored to repel them. At last, being too closely pressed, he fired the pistol at the nearest robber, with such good aim that he killed his adversary on the spot, while the fragments of the barrel, which burst at the same time, struck another in the face. Then charging resolutely upon the third bandit with the rusty sword, he quickly put both to flight, leaving behind them the corpse of their wretched comrade. Notwithstanding the obvious propriety of his conduct on this occasion, acting as he did in self-defence, the young man feared the consequences; he imagined himself already accused, persecuted, without the means of proving his innocence, and therefore determined to

hide himself by going into the interior of the plains, hoping thus to escape a punishment which his error made him regard as inevitable. Determined to gain an honest livelihood, he sought employment on the cattle farm of La Calzada, in the province of Barinas, where he soon became inured to the fatigues of the ranger's life; acquiring at the same time, under the tuition of a cruel negro majordomo, that proficiency in horsemanship which later in life gave him the superiority over the enemy.

Proud and jealous at the same time of his white apprentice, whom he imagined had been sent there by his master to spy his actions, the negro overseer of La Calzada spared no opportunity to put to the test the courage and strength of the future champion of those plains, sometimes compelling him to break in the most vicious horses, which often led him off for days into the open fields; at other times ordering him away upon the most hazardous ventures of the Llanos. Not satisfied with this show of authority over his pupil, the brutal black Mentor of young Paez ended the fatigues of a hard day's labor by ordering him to bring a pail of water and wash his muddy feet! But the tide of fortune soon changed; the whirlwind of revolution offered Paez a new field of adventure, and the humble peon of La Calzada rapidly gained the highest posts in the patriot army, while the haughty overseer went to increase the ranks of the opposing foe. In the course of events the majordomo was brought one day a prisoner to Paez, who not only spared his life, but kept him always near his person, his only revenge being to imitate the

tone of his former tyrant when calling upon young Paez to exercise the functions of the slave: "*Niño José Antonio!* bring a bowl of water to wash my feet!" to which the old negro humbly replied, "I see, *niño*, you have not forgotten your old tricks."

When the revolution broke out, on the 19th of April, 1810, Paez enlisted in the militia of Barinas as a common soldier, and soon after was promoted to the rank of sergeant of cavalry. This, however, being rather a slow process of promotion, he proceeded to organize an independent body of cavalry, with which he rendered important service to the cause of independence. But the path of glory was not without thorns, and our young leader found himself a prisoner in the hands of the merciless Spaniards, owing his preservation, as it was then believed, to the influence of a miracle. In those days a war without quarter was fiercely waged. The province of Barinas having been again occupied by the royalist forces, Paez fell into the hands of the cruel Puy, was thrown into prison and ordered to be executed in the city of Barinas the next day. At that time military executions of captured enemies were conducted by leading them out during the night to some lonely spot, where they were despatched with the lance or the sword. Paez and a number of his fellow-prisoners were thus being led out one night, when he observed, as he was leaving the prison, that he was uncovered; believing himself to be only going to make his deposition before the Governor, he requested his companion in the cell to lend him his hat. The Spanish officer

in charge of the mournful cortege, failing to recognize him under this guise, ordered him back to be exchanged for the owner of the hat, who, he supposed, was the identical "captain of the rebels." Thus he obtained unwittingly a respite of one day. The following night he was awakened about eleven o'clock by a great noise of horsemen and infantry in the street. He imagined they were coming to lead him and the rest of his fellow-prisoners to the place of execution. He prepared, therefore, to die; but Providence saved his life once more. The noise of arms and horses in the street had been occasioned by an alarm in consequence of information received by Governor Puy, that a considerable army of patriots was encamped on the banks of the Santo Domingo river, on which Barinas is situated, and was about marching on the city. Several parties, coming from different directions, confirmed the information received by the Governor, and the panic became general. It was supposed that the patriots in large numbers intended to take the Spanish garrison by surprise and seize upon the Governor. The latter, therefore, immediately abandoned Barinas with his forces, leaving only a few men to guard the prison, for in his hurry he had forgotten to execute the prisoners, as he had done before on similar occasions. This was the time for Paez to make a bold effort to save his life. The next morning he embraced the opportunity, broke his fetters, helped to release his fellow-prisoners, and overpowered one of the sentinels, who attempted to oppose his escape. Paez then fled to put himself once more at the head of a small band of

patriots, to harass the enemy in the same province of Barinas. On the morning succeeding the alarm, the royalists could not discover an enemy for more than fifty miles around the city. The alarm and panic occasioned by the reported approach of an enemy in the night, confirmed by so many persons, some of whom had gone out to reconnoitre, and the most singular disappearance, or absence, of this host on the following morning, gave rise to the popular belief, existing to this day among the common people, that the life of Paez was saved by the friendly intercession and miraculous appearance of an army of departed spirits, known as the *Ejército de las Animas.*

The next exploit of the future champion of the Llanos took place amongst the rugged mountains of Merida, to which point the remnants of the republican forces were retreating after the disasters of 1814. Utterly disheartened and surrounded on all sides by enemies, they hardly knew which way to turn. The column to which Paez belonged finding itself unexpectedly confronted on their march to Bailadores by a superior force, made a stand at a place called Etanques, while the enemy endeavored to gain the intermediate heights. The road which led to these was a narrow and deep cut on the sides of the steep mountain, which did not permit a force to deploy on being attacked ; observing which, Paez, who had no command of his own, and only figured as an *attaché* to a small body of cavalry under Capt. Antonio Rangel, who commanded the advanced post, strenuously urged the captain to pursue the royalists on their march ; Ran-

gel, however, contented himself with exchanging a few shots with the latter, and returned to occupy his position. Unable to restrain himself, Paez, who rode a spirited charger, dashed onward, making a great noise, as if proceeding from many voices, discharging a blunderbuss on the rear of the column, which killed the sergeant. Alarmed with the voices and the report of the gun, the royalists were seized with a sudden panic, and fled in consternation, throwing down their arms, and upsetting everything and one another in their precipitate flight, thus presenting an easier mark to the terrible lance of their pursuer. The only opposition encountered by the latter was from one José Maria Sanchez, a man renowned for his courage and much feared by the people of Merida, who compelled Paez to dismount and struggle hard with him for the possession of the exterminating weapon. Victorious at last over his formidable antagonist, the reckless champion remained complete master of the field. It was then that Paez, once again free to act according to his own judgment and impulses, conceived the idea of going through the centre of New Granada to the plains of Casanare, south of the province of Apure. This plan was the result of experience, which convinced him that the patriots could not triumph, notwithstanding their unheard-of efforts, while the Spaniards held possession of the plains and controlled the supply of horses. The acquisition of the Llanos gave the superiority to the Spaniards, as, by means of it, they had a source of supplies and a

safe retreat. Paez determined, therefore, to make that wild region the base of his military operations, and with this object organized a body of horsemen in the plains of Casanare, which he soon after led into the province of Apure.

In the language of another, "no man was better calculated to command the love and respect of his wild soldiery. Great bravery, a thorough knowledge of localities, an affable and familiar treatment of his followers, procured for Paez great popularity and an unlimited sway over the minds of his men. He was one of the best riders in a district of country celebrated for good horsemen, and understood the management of the lance, his favorite weapon, almost to perfection. He possessed great bodily strength and agility, and few could compete with him in the wild sports of the Llaneros, or inhabitants of the immense plains of Venezuela."

The Llanos are, in fact, a permanent camp of military instruction for their intrepid inhabitants. Accustomed from their infancy to subdue the wild horse, to master the wild bull, to swim across broad streams, and to grapple in single combat with the crocodile, the tiger and wild boar, the Llaneros learn to despise danger. When the war turned them from their ordinary occupations, the enemy found them ready-made soldiers. Inhabiting a genial atmosphere and endowed with iron constitutions, their wants are few and insignificant; in peace, the lazo and the horse; in war, the horse and the lance. Perfectly acquainted with the country and unencumbered with heavy accoutrements, the dwellers of the Llanos can-

not be conquered except by men of the same region, and Venezuela possesses in those limitless plains and in the breasts of their valorous children, the strongest bulwark of her national independence.

Paez, now master of his own military movements, resolved to meet the enemy there, and, if possible, to bring about an engagement. On the 16th of February, 1816, he commenced his march in pursuit of the royalist chief, Don Francisco Lopez, and in three hours' space met him at a place called Mata de la Miel, on the right bank of the river Apure. The royalist leader had two pieces of artillery and sixteen hundred men, whom he drew up at once in order of battle. Paez's forces amounted altogether to about six hundred cavalry. It was evening and the night fast advancing, on which account many of the patriot officers were of opinion that the engagement should be postponed until the following day. This very reason, however, determined the leader to enter at once into action, as he feared that his soldiers, observing the great superiority of the enemy in numbers, might take advantage of the night to desert. Paez accordingly divided his forces in two columns, placing the one, composed of New Granadians, under command of Captain Genaro Vasquez, and the other, composed of Venezuelians, under Captain Ramon Nonato Perez. The royalists were completely routed, and during all that night and the two following days the forces led by Paez pursued and captured a great portion of those under Don Francisco Lopez. Such was the action of Mata de la Miel. There were left dead on the field four hundred royalists, and a great number of prisoners were taken

together with about three thousand five hundred horses and nearly all the enemy's arms. Four months afterward, in June, Lopez again crossed the Apure with twelve hundred horsemen and four hundred infantry, but Paez met him near Mantecal and compelled him to retreat, after losing many men and horses.

Notwithstanding these advantages on the part of the patriot forces, the result of the following campaigns (1814, 1815, and 1816) was most disastrous to the arms of the republic elsewhere; Venezuela, New Granada, and the plains of Casanare again fell into the hands of the vengeful Spaniards. In 1816, a very numerous emigration of patriots, consisting of men, women, and children, in a state of great destitution and suffering, fled to the wilderness from the persecution of the royalists, and took refuge in the camp of Paez. Many persons of distinction were to be found among the fugitives, and a system of government was established for the regulation of affairs. A meeting of officers was held at Arichuna, and Paez appointed supreme chief, with the rank of General of Brigade. He applied himself immediately to raise suffictent forces to oppose Don Francisco Lopez and to acquire, if possible, some resources in his extreme want. The hardships and privations endured by the patriot army on the plains can scarcely be conceived. The soldiers were so destitute of clothing as to be compelled to use for a covering the hides of the cattle freshly killed; very few had hats, none shoes. The ordinary and only food was beef, without salt and without bread. There were, in addition to all this,

continual rains, and the rivers and creeks had overflowed and covered over the country. They wanted horses, and as these are indispensable to the Llaneros, they must be obtained before any thing else. Only wild horses could be procured, and they had to be tamed and broken. This was done in squadrons, and it was a curious spectacle to see five or six hundred riders at a time struggling to subdue these wild animals. Around the ground were stationed several officers, mounted on well-trained horses, whose duty it was to go after those which escaped from their riders, to prevent them from carrying away the saddles, although these were made of wood, with thongs of raw hides. Many years after these scenes, an eye-witness wrote: "We courted danger in order to put an end, with honor, to such a miserable life." To provide against this misery, Paez now turned his attention to the nearest source of supply, Barinas, a city abounding in all the commodities he stood most in need of. Although nearly two hundred miles distant, the patriot chieftain did not hesitate to invade his old antagonist in the midst of the rainy season. The undertaking could not, however, be executed without great peril and hardships, he having to contend not only against the inveterate enemies who occupied all the approaches to the city, but against the inundation of the savannas at the time. The expedition, moreover, had to be conducted with great secrecy, avoiding even the few channels left open in those inland seas for the transit of men on horseback. Not in the least deterred by obstacles so formidable in themselves, Paez got together one thousand picked men, and two

thousand white horses, animals of this color being reputed the best swimmers. With these, he crossed the Apure and several other streams, then at the height of their flood, being compelled besides to ford extensive lagoons of various depths to avoid the numerous gunboats of the enemy, stationed at all the important passes. On one of these, on the river Canaguá, the expedition was fortunate enough to capture by surprise a gunboat and a large quantity of hides, which were left behind with a strong guard for future use. When near Barinas, Paez sent a detachment to surprise also the town of Pedraza, to the south-east of the capital, with the object of drawing the attention of the royalists in that direction. The ruse succeeded admirably; the small detachment of men carried every thing before them, penetrating as far as the plaza, and then retreated, according to instructions, to rejoin the main body. Enraged at their audacity, the Spanish commander at Barinas sent out a large force in pursuit of the attacking party, thus weakening his own force. Paez then advanced against Barinas, disposing his line of march in single file, each horseman followed by his spare horse, tied to the tail of his own sumpter. The object of this arrangement was to deceive the royalists also in regard to the real numbers of the enemy, which from a distance presented a very imposing appearance. Barinas is situated on the border of an extensive plain, bounded on the south by the *mesa* of the same name, through which Paez made his entry into the doomed city when the sun was in the meridian. The dreaded army of "departed spirits" did not produce a more

appalling consternation among the royalists than the apparition of this unexpected body of ragged horsemen. They knew full well that, owing to the overflow of the savannas, no advance could be made upon the city from the south. They felt equally secure against any attack from the north and from the east, which were then entirely under their control, while on the west they were still better protected by the lofty Sierra Nevada. Without stopping to ascertain the real character of the force before them, the royalists collected together in a great hurry whatever valuables they prized most, and had already loaded several mules with them, when the enemy, dashing forward in full gallop, arrived in time to secure the rich booty, after dispersing the owners and their troops. The half-clad followers of Paez then fell upon the stores and abandoned houses of the royalists with the eagerness of men who had not seen a respectable garment in a long time. One of the officers was fortunate enough to capture a mule loaded with thirty thousand dollars in gold, while every man in the party got more goods than he could carry.

Paez only remained a sufficient time at Barinas to arrange the transportation of the booty, which took up nearly all the spare horses brought along for this purpose; without these and the hides seized at Canaguá, it would have been impossible to remove it to the patriot camp in the wilderness. Owing to the presence of a strong flotilla of gunboats at the mouth of the river, the captured vessel had to be abandoned after a while, and the wearisome route across the inundated savannas resumed by the returning caravan.

The hides served the double purpose of covering for the goods and lighters to ferry them over the streams. This species of leather canoe is an ingenious contrivance frequently resorted to in those wild regions wherever there is a scarcity of boats, and consists in a bag or trough formed by passing a rope through a number of holes round the rim of the hide, and gathering it over the goods. One end of the rope of sufficient length is then handed over to a good swimmer, who takes it between his teeth and tows the lighter after him. In this manner, the immense booty obtained at Barinas was successfully transported over one hundred miles of inundated plains, to the inconceivable joy of the wretched emigrants at the camp of Arichuna.

After allowing his troop sufficient time to rest from their fatigues, and finding it to his advantage to resume the offensive, at least to occupy the attention of his soldiers, Paez commenced his march toward Achaguas, although the season was still very severe. The march was slow, as, besides the difficulties of the road, they were encumbered by numerous emigrants, and compelled, at every step, to procure supplies on account of the want of stores. The great multitude of men, women, and children, moving with the army, represented to the life the picture of a nomadic people without home or country, who, after consuming the resources of the district they have occupied, raise their tents to conquer another.* In this manner they

* Nevertheless, Paez took particular care to preserve the breed of cattle on the plains of Apure. Notwithstanding that he was continually engaged in war, he issued most effective orders to prevent its extinc-

arrived at the sand hills or Médanos de Araguayuna, where, having left the emigrants under the protection of a resolute band of horsemen, Paez incorporated all the men capable of bearing arms in his ranks, and marched against Lopez, whom he supposed to be at Achaguas. But after proceeding a short distance, he learned that the enemy, to the number of seventeen hundred horsemen and four hundred infantry, was at the cattle farm called Yagual. Paez then changed his course and took his position between the enemy and the city of Achaguas. His army was divided into three columns, commanded by Generals Urdaneta and Servier, and by Colonel Santander; they were nearly all armed with lances, very few with muskets or carabines, and the supply of ammunition was scanty. On the 8th of October, they came in sight of the enemy, and although their number much exceeded that of the patriot forces, Paez did not hesitate to give them battle. The conflict was long and severe, but it was decidedly in favor of the patriots. Don Francisco Lopez was compelled to abandon his position, after sustaining a severe loss; on the next day he refused to renew the battle, and fell back upon Achaguas, having previously shipped on the river Arauca all his artillery and wounded for San Fernando. On the 13th, Lopez, having made a short resistance, abandoned the town, of which Paez took possession. Shortly after this, Lopez being attacked by surprise on the banks of the Apure, was utterly

tion. The origin of all the cattle estates which are at present to be found in Venezuela is to be traced to the Apure plains.

defeated, his forces dispersed, and he himself lost his life.

At the head of his brave soldiers, Paez rescued the province of Apure, a part of that of Barinas, in Venezuela, and recovered that of Casanare, in New Granada. Having increased his force by the new levies raised in these provinces and in others, he formed that army which subsequently rendered such important services in the cause of freedom, and whose exploits have been so much admired.

It is not my purpose to enter here into a detailed account of the events of that epoch; the limits of this chapter, and the relationship existing between the author and the subject of this hasty sketch, preclude the possibility of such an undertaking, especially when better pens have compiled them in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*—articles, Colombia and Bolivar; in the *American Cyclopædia*—articles, Paez and Venezuela; also in *Campaigns and Cruises in Venezuela*, and various other works by English officers who served in the ranks of the patriot armies at the time, to which English and American readers of history are especially referred for a more comprehensive view of that fearful struggle. My object is to give my readers some idea respecting the nature of that contest in that part of Venezuela which, after years of unheard-of privations and almost insurmountable difficulties, furnished at last the elements which decided the fate of Colombia upon the plains of Carabobo, Junin, and Boyacá.

Vain were, after this, the efforts of the Spanish

invaders to destroy what they contemptuously called *the Gang of Apure*, in their official documents. Several expeditions were despatched from Spain about this time, under the command of the ablest generals, and provided with all the material for a vigorous campaign. One of these, led by Lieut.-General Don Pablo Morillo, set sail from Cadiz on the 18th of February, 1815. It consisted of sixty-five transport ships and other smaller vessels, convoyed by the line-of-battle ship San Pedro Alcantara (lost afterwards during the blockade of the Island of Margarita), mounting seventy-four guns. The total number of men composing this expedition, including marines, amounted to fifteen thousand. The ships carrying this formidable armament cast anchor, on the third of April, 1815, in Puerto Santo, to the windward of Carupano, in Venezuela. Morillo, the commander of this expedition, was a brave, active, and energetic officer, cool in action, a severe disciplinarian, and was beloved by his soldiers. Besides this force, there was a royalist army of five thousand men in Venezuela, commanded by Morales.

At first, General Morillo met with little or no opposition, until, going to the interior, he encountered the wild horsemen of the plains. The haughty temper of the Spanish commander-in-chief could not bear that a handful of demi-savages, as he was pleased to style them, should insult the pennant of Castile any longer, and he therefore prepared to capture every one of them, with what results, the sequel of this narrative will show.

In the early part of January, 1817, the Spanish commanders, La Torre and Calzada, effected a junction at Guasdualito, on the plains of Apure. About the same time, the royalist brigadier, Don Ramon Correa, and Lieutenant-Colonel Don Salvador Gorrin, left San Fernando, and with their cavalry and infantry attacked the line of the patriots, and completely routed Guerrero, the republican general, forcing him to fall back upon Paez, after a bloody battle, in which the patriots sustained a considerable loss. The siege of San Fernando being raised in consequence of this triumph, the attention of La Torre and Calzada was directed to Paez, who presented the greatest obstacle to their occupation of the river Apure and its adjacent plains. An army of four thousand veteran soldiers of all arms, including seventeen hundred of the cavalry commanded by Colonel Remijio Ramos, presented a force sufficient to inspire the Spanish commander with confidence, particularly as La Torre, who was a brave and accomplished soldier, was anxious to distinguish himself among his companions in arms. He, therefore, marched to the town of San Vicente, following the right bank of the river Apure, with the intention of attacking Paez, who was then in Mantecal. On the 28th of January, the patriots and royalists met on the plain of Mucuritas ; the former, with a body of cavalry amounting only to eleven hundred horsemen, and the latter with the forces already mentioned. The result of the engagement was as unfortunate to La Torre as it proved advantageous to the patriots under Paez, who on this occasion made up for his inferiority in numbers by means of a stratagem

which nearly resulted in the destruction of the entire Spanish army. The order of battle adopted by the royalist leader was the best which the nature of the ground and the enemy he had to contend with would permit ; his infantry presented a strong and compact front, while his cavalry was posted on the wings and on the rear. Paez having only cavalry, could not come within the range of the enemy's muskets without running the risk of being wholly destroyed ; and he consequently conceived the idea of separating the royalist horse from the infantry. The presumptuous confidence of Colonel Ramos and the inexperience of La Torre in the Llanero's tactics, facilitated the execution of Paez's plan. Having formed two columns with a portion of his forces, Paez ordered them to attack the enemy's flanks, and then immediately to retreat, as if they had been repulsed. His object was to draw out the enemy's cavalry in the heat of the pursuit, and at once surround them with two other columns, which he had ready prepared for that purpose. This simple manœuvre had the desired effect, and La Torre's cavalry was speedily destroyed. The European hussars alone escaped, because they advanced with less precipitancy and in better order. The republican leader now ordered the dry grass of the plain to be set on fire, and it instantly became a sea of flame. Fortunately for La Torre, his infantry retreating precipitately in close column, succeeded in reaching a spot which had been burned some time before. Even there his infantry sustained several charges from Paez's cavalry, compelling him ultimately to seek a refuge in a dense wood on the right bank of the Apure,

where the pursuit ceased for want of infantry on the part of the patriots. Of this battle, General Morillo wrote: "Fourteen consecutive charges upon my wearied battalions convinced me that these men were not a small gang of cowards, as had been represented to me." On the following morning Morillo joined La Torre, and contiuued with him his march to San Fernando without crossing the Apure, and always in sight of the republican cavalry; Paez finally perceiving that the enemy avoided a new engagement, retired to San Juan de Payara.

In 1817, General Bolivar appeared in the province of Guayana, and his first effort was to open his communication with Paez, who did not hesitate to recognize his authority, although widely separated from the Liberator's head quarters.

From this period the patriots began to extend their operations; a series of brilliant actions took place at various points, and the republican cause appeared to revive on the line of the Apure and the Orinoco rivers. The acquisition of Guayana under Piar was an important and decisive event in the history of the war; by means of it, Bolivar was in a situation to harass the posts occupied by the royalists, on any point of the immense line embraced by the Orinoco and its numerous tributaries.

In the latter part of January, 1818, Bolivar joined him with two thousand five hundred disciplined troops, among them the famous British legion lately arrived, increasing the republican forces to about ten thousand infantry and the same number of cavalry, which last was composed of well-trained men, accus-

tomed to victory on the plains of Apure. The plan of the campaign having been arranged between Bolivar and Paez, they resolved to cross over the river Apure and march forthwith on Calabozo, where Morillo had established his headquarters. But here a great difficulty presented itself; the patriot forces had no boats in which to cross that broad and deep river. It was then that Paez conceived and executed the extraordinary plan of capturing with cavalry the gun-boats of the enemy stationed on the river, opposite the point toward which they were marching. An eye-witness and impartial foreigner, attached to the British Legion, thus describes this hazardous undertaking: "Bolivar stood on the shore gazing at these (the gun-boats) in despair, and continued disconsolately parading in front of them, when Paez, who had been on the look-out, rode up and inquired the cause of his disquietude. His Excellency observed, 'I would give the world to have possession of the Spanish flotilla, for without it I can never cross the river, and the troops are unable to march.' 'It shall be yours in an hour,' replied Paez. 'It is impossible,' said Bolivar, 'and the men must all perish.' 'Leave that to me,' rejoined Paez, and galloped off. In a few minutes he returned, bringing up his guard of honor, consisting of 300 lancers selected from the main body of the Llaneros, for their proved bravery and strength, and leading them to the bank, thus briefly addressed them: 'We must have these *flecheras*, or die. Let those follow Tio* who please.'

* Uncle. A name by which the Llaneros frequently address Paez.

CAPTURE OF THE SPANISH GUNBOATS BY LLANERO CAVALRY.

And at the same moment, spurring his horse, dashed into the river and swam towards the flotilla. The guard followed him with their lances in their hands, now encouraging their horses to bear up against the current by swimming by their sides and patting their necks, and then shouting to scare away the alligators, of which there were hundreds in the river, till they reached the boats, when, mounting their horses, they sprang from their backs on board them, headed by their leader, and, to the astonishment of those who beheld them from the shore, captured every one of them. To English officers, it may appear inconceivable that a body of cavalry, with no other arms than their lances, and no other mode of conveyance across a rapid river than their horses, should attack and take a fleet of gun-boats amidst shoals of alligators; but, strange as it may seem, it was actually accomplished, and there are many officers now in England who can testify to the truth of it."

The unprejudiced author of this narrative, which I am compelled to shorten for want of space, then adds:—"In short, he is altogether a most wonderful man; and were the numerous and extraordinary incidents of his life to be formed into a narrative, it would have more the semblance of romance than authentic biography. He is, above all things, a sincere patriot, and certainly a bright ornament to his country."*

* *Recollections of a Service of Three Years during the War of Extermination in the Republics of Venezuela and Colombia.* London, 1828. See also *Campaigns and Cruises in Venezuela.* London, 1831.

This dangerous manœuvre was performed at a distance of two miles from San Fernando, which, from that moment, was cut off from all communication with Morillo. The patriot army being thus provided with the means of transportation across the Apure, a body of cavalry was immediately despatched in the direction of the road leading to Calabozo, and succeeded in capturing by surprise a party of twenty-five men, who composed the advanced post of the enemy. In consequence of this manœuvre, Morillo was also taken by surprise on the 11th of February, at a time when his hussars and a portion of the battalion of Castille were at a place called Mision de Abajo, about three miles to the south of Calabozo. Only a few men from both regiments, with a Colonel, succeeded in making their escape to the intrenchments in the city. The sturdy veteran, Morillo, could not believe the report of his Colonel, that the whole patriot army was marching upon him. Haughtily accusing that officer of cowardice, he sallied forth in person with his staff to reconnoitre what he supposed to be a band of guerrillas ; but he himself had to flee for safety into the city, narrowly escaping death through the stoical heroism of his insulted Colonel, who threw himself between the Commander-in-chief and the lance of one of Paez's staff officers.

Instead of investing the royalists at once, Bolivar committed the error of encamping for the night with all his troops at the village of El Rastro, about four miles this side of Calabozo. Morillo improved

this opportunity to abandon the city under cover of night, and fell back on Caracas, by the mountainous route of El Sombrero, where the patriots could not follow him on account of the inferiority of their infantry. Paez then returned to the Apure, while Bolívar remained with the bulk of the army, to be soon after entirely annihilated at La Puerta by the royalist General. But the Genius of the Andes was untiring in his efforts to see his country, and the rest of the South American Continent, free from European oppression.

On the 16th January, 1819, Bolívar joined Paez again at San Juan de Payara with a newly organized *corps d'armée*, and their united forces amounted to four thousand men. Bolívar, as a recompense for the important services rendered by Paez to his country, raised him to the rank of General of Division, and left him in command of all the forces, while he proceeded to Angostura, where Congress was to meet in February. About this time the royalist Generals, Morillo and La Torre, also joined their forces at San Fernando, amounting in all to six thousand five hundred men of all arms. With these they immediately proceeded to attack the patriots at San Juan in the beginning of February. Paez retreated toward the Orinoco, transported all his infantry to the island of Urbana, and took up a position, with his guard and two squadrons of carabineers, at Cunaviche; the remainder of his horsemen he stationed on the plains of Rio Claro, and a most cumbersome emigration of ten thousand patriot refugees, that followed his camp, was taken to Araguaquen. The plan adopted by

Paez on this occasion was precisely the same as the one always practised by him in former campaigns; yet the royalist General was so infatuated by his eagerness to destroy the "Gang of Apure," that he was easily led away into the wilderness before he was conscious of his danger. On the 11th of February Morillo forced the pass of the river Arauca, and the patriots fell back, keeping their adversary under observation; at night, however, they retraced their steps, and in the morning appeared situated at a short distance in the opposite direction. Morillo countermarched, and for many days wandered over that wilderness, renewing his efforts to overtake an enemy which kept constantly before him, like the mirage of the desert, and which did him great injury by driving away the cattle. The only means he could employ to overtake his opponent and force him to battle, was to use his cavalry; but this jeopardized the only force which procured the subsistence of the army, and might thus compromise its safety. Not even at night were the royalists allowed to rest in peace. On one occasion Paéz caused a number of wild horses to be brought before the enemy's camp, and tying dry hides to the animals' tails, they were stampeded with shouts and shots towards the encampment. Imagining themselves attacked by the whole Llanero cavalry, the royalists sprang to their arms and opened fire on the affrighted horses, which caused that night more alarm and confusion among them than the two thousand oxen which Hannibal hurled against the Roman camp. At length, convinced of the inutility of his efforts,

Morillo recrossed the Arauca, and in the early part of March established his headquarters at Achaguas.

On the first day of April, General Morillo again resumed the offensive, marching along the left bank of the Arauca and approaching the position occupied on the right bank by Generals Paez and Bolívar; the latter had recently returned from the Congress at Angostura, where he had been elected President of the Republic, and resumed the command in chief of the army. Morillo made several feigned movements to the right and to the left, as if he wished to cross the river, and at noon of the 2d, took up his position nearly opposite that of Bolívar, out of range of the cannon. For the purpose of drawing him forth, General Paez crossed the river with one hundred and fifty horsemen, composed mostly of officers who volunteered for the hazardous undertaking; with these he formed three small columns and advanced upon the enemy. Morillo immediately put all his forces in motion; his infantry and artillery commenced firing, while the cavalry charged upon the small band of patriots, hoping to overpower by numbers the weak columns of the enemy; he himself directed his course toward the bank of the river. Paez, in the mean time, retreated in order, purposely leaving the pass of the river on his rear. Morillo, observing this, and supposing him inevitably lost, detached from the army all the cavalry in pursuit of Paez, and directed his fire upon the right bank, defended by some light troops. As soon, however, as the republican General perceived that the enemy's horse were at a considerable distance from the army, and in disorder, he faced

about suddenly, attacked his pursuers in front and on the flanks, in small groups of twenty men, and without giving them time to recover from their astonishment or to re-form the lines, he routed them, occasioning great loss. In vain they made the most obstinate resistance—in vain the carabineers dismounted—all their efforts were useless; disconcerted and taken by surprise, all those who opposed the vigorous attack were killed upon the spot. The victors pursued the remnants of the force as far as the enemy's lines, slaying all whom they overtook. Their infantry, thrown into confusion, sought refuge in the woods, the artillery ceased firing, and night prevented the further destruction of the royalist army. On the day following this encounter, Bolívar issued a decree, conferring the cross of Liberators (*Libertadores*) on all the officers, sergeants, corporals, and soldiers, who fought in this engagement, known in history by the name of Queseras del Medio; while the following proclamation announced to the army the success recently obtained by the republican arms:

SIMON BOLÍVAR PRESIDENT, ETC., ETC.

"*To the Heroes of the Army of Apure:*

"SOLDIERS! You have just performed the most extraordinary action that can be recorded in the military history of nations—one hundred and fifty men, or, rather, one hundred and fifty heroes, led on by the undaunted General Paez, have deliberately attacked in front the whole Spanish army, under Morillo;

artillery, infantry, cavalry, nothing availed to defend the enemy from the hundred and fifty companions of the intrepid Paez. The columns of their cavalry have disappeared under the strokes of our lances; their infantry sought a shelter in the woods; the roar of their cannon was silenced before the breasts of our horses, and only the darkness of night preserved the army of the tyrant from complete and absolute destruction.

"Soldiers! The deed you have performed is but the prelude of what you can accomplish. Prepare then for the combat, and reckon on victory, which you carry on the point of your lances and bayonets.

"BOLÍVAR.

"HEAD-QUARTERS AT POTRERITOS MARREREÑOS, April 3, 1819."

After this engagement, Morillo, finding himself again deprived of his cavalry in the heart of the savannas, retreated precipitately to Achaguas, and finally to San Fernando, which place he fortified strongly, and recrossing the Apure, sought a more advantageous position against the attacks of his hovering enemy.

The engagement of Queseras del Medio was the precursor of new plans and bold projects, combined between Bolívar and Paez. The plains of Venezuela, being now entirely rescued from the enemy, these two Generals arranged the dangerous and important expedition that was to give freedom to New Granada. Paez had the honor accorded him of choosing which of the two should command the expedition. They both agreed that Bolívar should march into New

Granada, and that Paez should preserve, at all risks, the possession of the plains of Apure. Victory crowned the republican arms in New Granada, and Paez resolutely and successfully defended the important territory confided to his care and protection.

On the 17th December, 1819, Venezuela and New Granada were united into one great republic, under the name of Colombia, with a territory embracing nearly 500,000 square miles.

The year 1821 is celebrated for the important victory obtained by the republican army, under Bolívar and Paez, on the field of Carabobo, which secured Venezuela to the patriots. General Bolívar's forces amounted to 6,000 men. Only the first division of the army, commanded by Paez, took part in the battle. This division was composed of the gallant British Legion, already alluded to, the battalion of Apure, and 1,500 horsemen. The field of Carabobo is a vast and open plain, lying in a southerly direction from Valencia. An army endeavoring to enter this plain from Tinaquillo, as the patriot army was attempting to do, is obliged, after passing the river Chirgua, to penetrate over the defile called Buena Vista, lying to the northeast. This defile is a formidable position, on which a few men can easily arrest the progress of an army. If this pass be gained, and the many obstructions be overcome, which an enemy can easily oppose over a rough and craggy road of considerable length, there still remains a narrow valley to be traversed, formed by hills, which constitute the entrance on the west to the plain of Carabobo; here the level ground commences. General La Torre,

the Spanish commander, had stationed in the valley and on both sides on the hills commanding it, several pieces of artillery, as well as strong bodies of infantry. On the plain near the opening of the valley the extended line of infantry was deployed in order of battle, with its right resting upon a thicket; next followed another line, and between the flanks of both, there were two strong bodies of cavalry. The second line of battle had on its left the road to El Pao, and the cavalry on the same side was stationed on the brow of a hill over which that road passes; the summit of the hill was occupied by a battalion. Such was the military position of the Spanish forces, amounting on this occasion to 9,000 men. On the 24th of June, the patriot General occupied the defile, and from that place observed the position of the enemy. The narrow road pursued by Bolívar allowed him only the room necessary to file off, and the Spaniards not only guarded the outlet into the plain, but commanded the valley with their artillery and a large body of infantry. The position was impregnable. It was therefore resolved that General Paez, with considerable risk and difficulty, should penetrate through a foot-path but little known, and turn the enemy's right. This path was extremely hazardous. It begins at the high road leading to San Carlos, to the west of the valley; goes over the top of a small hill covered with woods, which was commanded by the Spanish artillery, and leads into a ravine where the men were compelled to pass singly, because it was very rough and full of brambles and briars. When the enemy discovered the movement of the

advancing forces under Paez, he directed part of his own against the latter, and some of his battalions came up to the ravine, as the patriot battalion of Apure was beginning to pass it, and a vigorous firing commenced and was continued on both sides. The republican corps at last succeeded in passing the ravine, but no longer able to sustain singly the enemy's charge, was already giving way, when the British Legion came up to their support. The enemy had by this time brought into action four of his best battalions, against only one of the patriots. But the gallant Britons now filed off and formed in order of battle, under a murderous fire, with almost superhuman coolness, and kneeling down, they could not be made to yield an inch of ground. Almost all its officers were either killed or wounded; but the service rendered by those brave foreigners was great indeed. Their heroic firmness gave time for the battalion of Apure to rally and return to the charge, while two companies of *Tiradores*, led on by the gallant Heras, came also into the action. The enemy at last yielded under the simultaneous charge of the bayonet made by these different corps and fell back upon the cavalry for support. By this time the body-guard of General Paez, six hundred strong, had passed the ravine, and charging the enemy's horse on the rear of its columns, routed them completely and decided the action on that memorable day. Only one battalion, the famous Valencey, successfully repelled the furious charges of the patriot cavalry, which pursued the royalists as far as Valencia. General La Torre, with the remnant of his forces, shut himself up in the forti-

fications of Puerto Cabello, which were finally carried by assault on the 7th of November in the same year by General Paez.

The victory gained at Carabobo was complete and brilliant, decisive of the fate of the republic, and glorious to the brave soldiers of Apure, whose favored leader was raised by Bolívar to the rank of General-in-chief on the field of battle—an appointment which was subsequently ratified by Congress "in acknowledgment of his extraordinary valor and military virtues." How he afterwards became Supreme Chief of Venezuela; twice President of the Republic: was banished by a turbulent party calling themselves *Liberales*, narrowly escaping with his life to the United States of America, from whence, after an exile of ten years, he was recalled, and placed again at the head of the nation by popular acclamation; became thoroughly disgusted with the unruly disposition of his countrymen, and returned to end his days in

"The land of the free and the home of the brave;"

he has fully recounted in his Autobiography,* recently published in this country.

* Autobiografia del General José A. Paez. Nueva York, 1867.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SCENES AT THE PASS OF APURITO.

When we were apprised that every thing was ready at the pass, we moved on from San Pablo with the horses, the cattle following behind by easy marches, to allow them sufficient time to graze on the rich herbage by the way.

On our arrival at Apurito, we found the river quite swollen with the recent showers and already extending from bank to bank. The first business was to select among our men and horses the strongest and most capable of enduring the fatigue and of guiding through the boisterous waves of the Apure the various lots into which the cattle were divided for the purpose. Our next step was to assemble at the pass a sufficient number of canoes with expert paddlers to act in concert with the leading men and horses, by flanking the swimmers in the river. Two long palisades, running parallel down to the bank of the river and narrowing toward the water, had already been constructed; through these the animals, in lots of two hundred at a time, were driven at full speed,

with deafening shouts and earnest goading, while two men, stripped naked and mounted on two spirited horses without saddles, headed the movement, plunging headlong into the river pell-mell with the cattle, which were thus encouraged to swim across. A herd of tame animals was stationed on the opposite shore to incorporate the swimmers as they came out of the water. Having done this, the leaders swam back to procure another lot of animals, a feat they performed for about twenty successive times in the course of the day. Nevertheless, the task was not so easily accomplished as was practised with the horses; for it often happened that the bulls became quite refractory and pugnacious, in which case the men in the canoes were obliged to hold them by the horns, dragging them along by main force as they paddled on; at other times the beasts got alongside of the leading men and horses, and then the danger to both was imminent, the bulls attacking them in the water; thus many valuable horses were killed by these infuriated animals, while the men had several narrow escapes. What with savage bulls, electric eels, crocodiles and caribes—not to mention other pernicious creatures of the waters and the broad expanse of the river before them—the task of these bold adventurers is truly appalling; yet they go to work and accomplish their task with a willing heart and a perfect *nonchalance* of every thing around them. The same might be said also in regard to the noble steeds which share with them the dangers of the river, acting at the same time the part of floating bridges to the men, and as decoys to the cattle during the passage. Their

powers of endurance, in this instance, are the more surprising, inasmuch as they are not allowed even a few moments' rest after they land, being kept in constant motion the whole day.

A number of horsemen with lazos were also stationed along the shore to secure those bulls which, eluding the vigilance of the men in the canoes, succeeded in regaining the land; many were drowned, however, in the attempt, and their carcasses abandoned to the turkey-buzzards, from an inherent disgust among the people of the Llanos for the flesh of animals which have not been killed in the usual way. On one or two occasions, the whole troop rebelled against their drivers and succeeded in making their escape to their pasture fields, in spite of the horsemen on shore; others, after reaching the sloping banks across the river below the pass, were arrested in their flight by the overhanging cliffs, and finally hurled to a watery grave by the rapid rise of the river.

Thus the cost of these expeditions, although exceedingly interesting to those participating in the excitement, is sometimes greater than the profits arising therefrom, and none but Llaneros, who are accustomed to live on beef and water, ought to indulge in this truly savage business. Our loss in horses alone, without reckoning the expenses of the expedition and the danger to flesh and bone, amounted on this occasion to about thirty animals, which in round figures, setting the value of every horse at the minimum price of one hundred dollars, would make the sum of three thousand dollars; while the value of the cattle itself, many of which were also lost to us, could hardly be

set down at five dollars a head at that epoch. One of the horses was so valuable, that our Leader requested the Doctor to attend the wounded animal and endeavor to save his life if possible. On examination, it was found that his bowels were partly forced out through the wound; but as he would not allow any body to touch him, it was resolved to tie his feet; then passing a pole through the legs of the animal, he was lifted from the ground in a reverse position, to allow the Doctor to operate more conveniently. It was already very dark, and the group of Llaneros lifting the patient, with others holding up lighted torches made of rags and tallow, and the humorous Esculapius leaning over the struggling beast, presented a scene ludicrous in the extreme. In spite of the skill with which he performed the operation, and the humane care of the owner, the horse expired the same night.

Three whole days were spent in the laborious occupation of forcing the cattle across the river. Nor were the nights less diligently employed at the village in the more entertaining recreation of dancing, flirting and gambling, according to the tastes and inclinations of our motley assembly. It must be confessed, however, that the latter had more incentives for the people of that pastoral region than the shepherd's reed and crook. Occasionally a fight would occur during these nocturnal revelries; but this, beyond some hard words and brandishing of swords and daggers by moonlight, which rather added to the picturesqueness of the scene, never ended in any thing very serious.

"Caló el chapeo, requirió la espada,
Miró al soslayo, fuése y no hubo nada."

The river was now rising so rapidly, that in order to reach our camp in the neighborhood of the village, we were obliged to place canoes across the main street leading to it, for fear of coming in contact with any of the numerous tenants of that stream. About this time the fish, conscious of the approaching inundation of the savannas, commence to ascend the river in search of those places best suited for spawning; and so great is the number of those that seek a nuptial rendezvous, that the noise they make in the water can be heard at some distance from the river. During their migration the water becomes so tainted with their flavor, that it is unfit to drink or wash in. Desirous of obtaining some live specimens for sketching, I procured a *tarraya*, or throw net, which I requested one of our men to launch near the bank; he

did so; but when he tried to lift it, he found it impossible unassisted, which made us fear that the net had got entangled among snags at the bottom of the river. A companion was called to our assistance, and between us three, we soon brought it up, when, to my astonishment and delight, I found the net full of *coporos*, *palometas*, and other delicacies; the caribes, however, soon rendered it perfectly useless, which circumstance I considered a misfortune, as I could not keep the fish long without spoiling. Next day I was advised by one of the villagers to place three or four canoes, partly filled with water, across the stream; the fish, finding their progress arrested by the obstruction, endeavored to jump over; in doing which they fell in the canoes by hundreds. The contrivance succeeded so well, that every morning I could depend on a plentiful supply, both for my sketch-book and the frying-pan. My attention was particularly attracted this time by a large fish called the *valenton*, from its great strength which, as I was informed, enables him to drag a canoe after him when caught with the hook and line. A distressing occurrence took place there which nearly cost the life of a young man while engaged in fishing for the *valenton*. The angler and a friend were engaged in conversation, with their lines thrown carelessly over the sides of the canoe, when the fish seized the bait and ran off, as he is in the habit of doing. The jerk was so violent, that the young man was unable to hold the line, and allowed it to slip through his hands; he was not aware that at the end of the line there was another hook, which buried itself in the thumb of his right

hand; the next moment he was violently pitched in the water and dragged for some distance, when fortunately the line broke, and he was picked up almost insensible by his companion. During its gambols in the river, the *valenton* jumps sometimes three feet clear out of the water, raising a large volume of spray and striking the surface with its powerful tail in its fall; so great is the splash, that the noise can be heard a great distance off, especially in the stillness of the night, when the fish seems to be more busily engaged in hunting.

The *payara* also delights at this time in those jumps so much dreaded by fishermen,* and even by people wearing any red garment about their persons; for this fish, like the caribe, is said to be attracted by that color, just as wild bulls are; so much so that it often happens that one of them springs on people thus attired in the canoes, though it always pays dearly for its temerity, as, in consequence of the peculiar structure of its jaws, the fish cannot disentangle itself from the garment, to which it remains attached until released by the hand of its intended victim, who is very glad of the chance thus unexpectedly thrown in his way, for the payara is a most delicious fish, often weighing twenty and thirty pounds, and withal very beautiful. Of this savage propensity people avail themselves to capture this fish without hook or line, on the large rivers, such as the Apure and Orinoco, where they seem to be most daring; a piece of

* See page 62.

red flannel, or some other strong material, tied to the end of a long rod, being sufficient for the sport : the tempting bait is held over the side of the canoe a few inches above the surface of the water, and no sooner does the fish perceive the alluring decoy, than with one spring it seizes it and remains as firmly attached to it, as if held by an iron bolt ; for in addition to its formidable row of teeth, which are long and sharp as needles, the payara has on the lower jaw two very much elongated fangs that penetrate the head through corresponding passages in it which allow the points to protrude close to the eyes of the fish, and unless it tears off the piece, as it often does to the naked and arnatto-stained Indian while paddling his canoe, the payara perishes by its own arms.

Among the many eventful incidents of *la Independencia* still fresh in the memory of our Leader, he relates an anecdote in connection with the *Libertador*, Simon Bolívar, in which both these champions of freedom participated while engaged on an important reconnoissance during the rainy season. The savannas being, as usual, overflowed for the most part, and there being no other means of transportation than the frail canoes of the country, the two chieftains were compelled to travel in one of these over their inundated domain, with the assistance of two Indian paddlers. Fish were so numerous, that numbers of them, disturbed by the strokes of the paddles against the sides of the canoe, jumped in all directions, while not a few fell amidst the distinguished passengers. The Libertador who, like almost all great men, had also his weak points, possessed a very nervous temperament,

especially about little things; therefore he felt quite uneasy at the unceremonious intrusion from the finny inhabitants of his swampy realms, whose movements he mistook for a mischievous propensity on their part to attack the wayfarer. On the other hand, our Leader, who was always ready to practise a good joke, seized the opportunity to occasionally tip the canoe so as to make it ship water, and more fish along with it. Whereupon his companion, who was not aware of the trick practised upon him, imagining that the fish were becoming bolder as they advanced, exclaimed in utter despair, "D——n it! *Compañero*, let us pull back, for even the fish are savage in this country."

When the waters subside, thousands, nay, millions remain struggling in the ponds and little pools, left on the savannas, where they soon perish and rot away, tainting the air with their effluvium. Some of them, like the *curito*, a species of Silurus, covered with transverse plates surrounding the body, have the power of living buried in the indurated mud, from whence they are called to life again by the returning showers. As they form a most delicious mess, they are eagerly sought by men and women, who resort to these places armed with wicker baskets, and collect great numbers of the fish before they are carried away by the increasing inundation of the savannas.

A very singular belief, shared likewise, according to Sir Emerson Tennent, by the people of Ceylon, exists in the Apure respecting fish falling from the clouds. Alluding to this phenomenon, that ingenious writer observes: "Both at Galle and Colombo in the southwest monsoon, fish are popularly believed to

have fallen from the clouds during violent showers; but those found on the occasions that give rise to this belief, consist of smallest fry, such as could be caught up by water-spouts and vortices analogous to them, or otherwise blown on shore from the surf; whereas those which suddenly appear in the replenished tanks and in the hollows which they overflow, are mature and well-grown fish. Besides, the latter are found under the circumstances I have described, in all parts of the interior, whilst the prodigy of a supposed fall of fish from the sky has been noticed, I apprehend, only in the vicinity of the sea or of some inland water."

Although the author further explains the phenomenon on the supposition that some fish are endowed with the power of locomotion over land, while others in a torpid state remain buried in the mud until the return of the rainy season; yet, I have been assured by reliable persons that live fish have been picked up in places where no such possible contingencies could occur; for instance, upon the roofs of houses or amidst wide plains far from running water. Most of those thus found are small, from three to seven inches long; but none of them capable of living more than twenty minutes out of water; and the father of the writer once even witnessed a fall of *bocachicos*, a fish which seldom lives over five minutes out of its own element.

In support of these views, which were embodied in my *Wild Scenes in South America*, I now have the pleasure of adding the testimony of no less an

authority than Gosse, who has collected a number of authentic examples of this phenomenon in his *Romance of Natural History.* According to his statements, fish-showers have occurred in all parts of the world, not even excepting his own country—England,—where, early in 1859, the newspapers of South Wales recorded a shower of fish in the Valley of Aberdare. The repeated statements attracted more notice than usual, and the Rev. John Griffith, the vicar of the parish, communicated the results of his inquiries to the *Evening Mail.*

"If now we look to other lands," continues the author, "we shall find that the descent of fishes from the atmosphere, under conditions little understood, is a phenomenon which rests on indubitable evidence. Humboldt has published interesting details of the ejection of fish in large quantities from volcanoes in South America. On the night between the 19th and 20th of June, 1698, the summit of Carguairazo, a volcano more than 19,000 feet in height, fell in, and the surrounding country for nearly thirty-two square miles was covered with mud and fishes. A similar eruption of fish from the volcano of Imbabura was supposed to have been the cause of a putrid fever which raged in the town of Ibarra seven years before that period."

This is accounted for on the supposition that subterraneous lakes, communicating with surface-waters, form in cavities in the declivities, or at the base of a volcano. In the course of time these internal cavities are burst open by the force of the volcanic explosions, and their contents discharged through the water.

But the most extraordinary account recorded by Gosse is that of Dr. Buist, of Bombay, who, after enumerating the cases above cited, and others of similar character, goes on to say :—"In 1824 fishes fell at Meerut on the men of her Majesty's 14th Regiment, then out at drill, and were caught in numbers. In July, 1826, live fish were seen to fall on the grass at Moradabad during a storm. They were the common *Cyprinus*, so prevalent in our Indian waters. On the 19th of February, 1830, at noon, a heavy fall of fish occurred at the Nokulhatty factory, in the Daccah Zillah ; depositions on the subject were obtained from nine different parties. The fish were all dead ; most of them were large ; some were fresh ; others were rotten and mutilated. They were seen at first in the sky, like a flock of birds, descending rapidly to the ground ; there was rain drizzling, but no storm. On the 16th and 17th of May, 1833, a fall of fish occurred in the Zillah of Foottehpoor, about three miles north of Jumna, after a violent storm of wind and rain. The fish were from a pound and a half to three pounds in weight, and the same species as those found in the tanks in the neighborhood. They were all dead and dry. A fall of fish occurred at Allahabad during a storm in May, 1835 ; they were of the chowla species, and were found dead and dry after the storm had passed over the district. On the 20th of September, 1839, after a smart shower of rain, a quantity of fish, about three inches in length, and all of the same kind, fell at the Sunderbunds, about twenty miles south of Calcutta. On

this occasion it was remarked that the fish did not fall here and there irregularly over the ground, but in a continuous straight line, not more than a span in breadth. The vast multitudes of fish with which the low grounds around Bombay are covered, about a week or ten days after the first burst of the monsoon, appear to be derived from the adjoining pools or rivulets, and not to descend from the sky. They are not, as far as I know, found in the higher parts of the island. I have never seen them, though I have watched carefully, in casks collecting water from the roofs of buildings, or heard of them on the decks or awnings of vessels in the harbor, where they must have appeared had they descended from the sky. One of the most remarkable phenomena of this kind occurred during a tremendous deluge of rain at Kattywar, on the 25th of July, 1850, where the ground around Rajkote was found literally covered with fish ; some of them were found on the top of haystacks, where probably they had been drifted by the storm. In the course of twenty-four successive hours twenty-seven inches of rain fell ; thirty-five fell in twenty-six hours, seven inches in one hour and a half, being the heaviest fall on record. At Poonah, on the 3d of August, 1852, after a very heavy fall of rain, multitudes of fish were caught on the ground in the cantonments, full half a mile from the nearest stream. If showers of fish are to be explained on the assumption that they are carried up by squalls or violent winds from rivers or spaces of water not far away from where they fall, it would be nothing wonderful were they seen to

descend from the air during the furious squalls which occasionally occur in July."

Sir E. Tennent, before cited, also witnessed in Ceylon another of those fish-showers:—"I had an opportunity, on one occasion only, of witnessing the phenomenon which gives rise to this popular belief. I was driving in the cinnamon gardens near the fort of Colombo, and saw a violent but partial shower descend at no great distance before me. On coming to the spot, I found a multitude of small silvery fish, from one and a half to two inches in length, leaping on the gravel of the high road, numbers of which I collected and brought away in my palanquin. The spot was about half a mile from the sea, and entirely unconnected with any water-course or pool." *

The same curious fact respecting the habits of certain kinds of fish in the *Llanos*, which bury themselves in the mud at the close of the rainy season, also appears to take place in India and Ceylon; for, according to Gosse, "the pools, reservoirs, and tanks are well provided with fish of various species, though the water twice every year becomes perfectly evaporated, and the mud of the bottom is entirely converted into dust, or takes the condition of baked clay, gaping with wide and deep clefts, in which not the slightest sign of moisture can be detected. This is the case with temporary hollows in the soil, which have no connection with running streams or permanent waters,

* *Natural History of Ceylon.*

from which they might be supposed to receive a fresh stock of fish."

After proving conclusively that these fishes could not proceed from either the clouds, as the generality of people believe, nor from impregnated ova, as Mr. Farrell suggests, the author observes :—"Neither of these hypotheses, then, will account for the fact; and we must admit that the fishes of these regions, have the instinct to burrow down in the solid mud of the bottom, at the approach of the dry season, and the power of retaining life, doubtless in a torpid condition, until the return of the periodic rains, as Theophrastus long ago observed."

But, who ever heard of showers of toads and frogs? Yet, such is the fact, astonished reader; and were you to visit with me some of the lagoons and ponds of South America at night, you would not fail to notice that the air, as well as the earth and waters, seems filled with the piercing, deafening noise proceeding from them. "According to travellers in tropical America, the inhabitants of Porto Bello assert that every drop of rain is changed into a toad; the most instructed, however, believe that the spawn of these animals is raised with the vapor from the adjoining swamps, and, being driven in the clouds over the city, the ova are hatched as they descend in rain. 'Tis certain that the streets after a night of heavy rain are almost covered with the ill-favored reptiles; and it is imposible to walk without crushing them. But heretic philosophers point to the mature growth of the vermin, many of them being

six inches in length, and maintain that the hypothesis just mentioned will scarcely account for the appearance of these." *

But it is not South America alone that can boast of such an extraordinary phenomenon; for the same accomplished author records similar showers as occurring in England and various parts of the Continent: "In two or three of these cases, the toads were not only observed in countless numbers on the ground during and after heavy storms of rain, but were seen to strike upon the roofs of houses, bounding thence into the streets; they even fell upon the hats, and, in one instance, were actually received into the outstretched hand."

It would seem that not even quadrupeds are exempt there, from the same rule, for we often hear the phrase in English, "If it should rain cats and dogs," which I, for want of a better acquaintance with English phraseology, am at a loss how to interpret. We all know that stone-showers are not uncommon, especially ever since "the thunderer," Jupiter, *alias* Jove, lost his power among us through the advancing strides of civilization. Previous to this, we are told of his paying occasional visits to his lady-loves on earth in the shape of golden showers, which have been exchanged subsequently for a less costly material; but showers of "cats and dogs" I do not believe ever occurred, even to an old sinner like him.

* Gosse, *Romance of Natural History.*

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WONDERS OF THE RIVER.

MARVELLOUS as the Apure river is in point of living creatures, it is nothing in comparison with the Orinoco, into which it flows, and the Amazon river, that connects with the Orinoco through the Casiquiare and Rio Negro. The recent explorations of Professor Agassiz in the Amazon, and the former researches of Wallace on the latter river, prove, I hope conclusively, that my statements concerning the fishes of these regions are far below the mark in point of numbers, and that there is *no end* to the varieties. Wallace, who spent nearly four years on the Rio Negro collecting objects of natural history for the British Museum, and whose principal fare consisted of the fish caught by his men, tells us, "I began now to take a great interest in the beauty and variety of the species, and, whenever I could, I made accurate drawings and descriptions of them. Many are of a most excellent flavor, surpassing anything I have tasted in England, either from the fresh

or the salt waters ; and many species have real fat, which renders the water they are boiled in a rich and agreeable broth. Not a drop of this is wasted, but, with a little pepper and *farinha*, is all consumed, with as much relish as if it were the most delicate soup." *

And Agassiz, in his interesting lectures on the same subject, says : "Now, what are the fishes which inhabit the Amazon ? for I wanted to say all this simply as a preparation to give you some definite idea of the various types of fish which we find in that mighty basin. Not one of those fishes with which we are familiar in our rivers is to be found there ; not one of those which are known in the rivers of Europe is to be found there ; not one from any other fresh water basin is to be found there. The Amazon has fishes of its own, utterly different from those of any other basin, and these fishes are different from those in all other fresh water rivers of Brazil, and in each part of the Amazon there are fish of a peculiar character, so that those which inhabit the lower course of the Amazon differ from those found in the upper. So great is the variety, that in small lakes of water, at parts of the Amazon, we find an endless variety. I examined a little lake, just at the junction of the Rio Negro with the Amazon. The lake was only a few hundred yards in extent, and in that pool, for it was hardly anything more, I found in the course of two months over two hundred different kinds of fish, and three

* Travels on the Rio Negro.

times larger than can be found in the Mississippi or in the Senegal or Ganges or Nile. The number of fish found in the whole basin of the Amazon is not less than two thousand different kinds, that is, ten times as many as were known about a century ago to exist in the whole world. And strange to say, it would seem that, in proportion as we become acquainted with a larger number of these animals they should be found to resemble one another more and more. On the contrary, however, such are the peculiarities of their features, such is the infinite number of circumstances which brings about differences among them, that in proportion as I find a larger and larger number, I find the difference between them seems to grow, and though it appears paradoxical, it is strictly true."

And returning now to the Orinoco, the good missionary and historiographer of that noble river, Father Gumilla, tells us that "So great is the multitude of fishes and turtles, that the slime, excrements and continual blood shed by those which devour or wound each other, is the principal cause of the heaviness and bad taste of the water of the Orinoco, which is also the case in some of the rivers of Hungary, and can be more readily perceived in basins or reservoirs devoted to the preservation of live fish, where the water soon becomes tainted and unpalatable, although it may go in and out freely.

"What astonishes still more is the novelty of the species and curious shapes of these fishes, so different from those of our Europe, for not even the sardinas have the flavor nor the shape of these. All that we

can say, after a careful examination of these fishes, is, this one resembles somewhat the trout, that one the sole, etc. ; but no one can say with certainty this is like any in Europe. But what of it, when it is a fact that the fish found in the waters of the *tierra caliente* are totally different from those of the *tierra fria ?* "

Of the modes of fishing practised by the Indians of his Mission, he also tells us many curious devices. " Observe," he says, " those four canoes, manned by the boys of the Doctrina, and darting side by side along the river ; well, this is the most novel and the most curious mode of fishing ever devised, as the fishes here called Bocachicos, Palometas, Lizas, Sardinas, and many other kinds of smaller fry, jump of their own accord into the canoes in such quantities that, were not the paddlers expert enough and their craft propelled with such rapidity, these would soon fill up and sink with the weight of the fish that fall in them ; for each kind has its proper season for spawning, and with the object of saving some of their ova to multiply their species, they have been taught by the Supreme Author of Nature to quit their haunts and seek some convenient eddy, where, placing their tails against the current, they receive in their gills the little eggs which may chance to fall in them ; and these are the only ones saved, the rest being devoured by other fishes, whose numbers at and near these currents is immense, one shoal crowding on the top of another."

In the rivers and streams of minor importance, where fish are not so abundant, the natives, by way

of pastime, and also to vary their fare, avail themselves of the roots of two plants—the *cuna* and the *barbasco*,* both of which possess the singular peculiarity of intoxicating fish, even when the smallest quantity of the juice of the roots is thrown in the stream, producing such commotion among the finny inhabitants, that they fall an easy prey to the Indians, who take a special delight in this wholesale slaughter. The *cuna* is a small plant, somewhat like clover, producing a bulbous root like a small turnip, but with very different smell and taste, and the *barbasco*, a vine, very common in all parts of the country, and although both are exceedingly deleterious to fish, they are not so to other creatures. The process is very simple: A quantity of the roots or vines is slightly pounded with a wooden mallet and thrown in the water, and no sooner do the fish perceive the smell of it, than they rush frantically up and down the stream to avoid its contact; those which take the former course find their progress arrested by a file of Indians, who, armed with poles, beat about the water to turn them back, which they quickly do, but only to find their retreat cut off in that direction too, for their cunning assailants have already taken the precaution to bar the stream with a double row of stakes, the lower one higher than the upper. Not discouraged in the least, the larger and stronger fish make another rush up the stream; but no sooner do they come in contact with the noxious herb than they retreat again towards the

* "Piscidea erithryna and Jacquinia armillaris."—*Humboldt.*

barricade, and here, redoubling their energies, leap over the first row of stakes, and thus find themselves entrapped within the narrow limits of the stockade. In the meantime the smaller fish, having neither the strength nor the courage to save themselves, become thoroughly intoxicated with the juices already disseminated in the water, and fall an easy prey to the joyous urchins, who pounce upon them, and transfer them to the baskets they carry for the purpose. This is a very amusing mode of fishing, and during the excitement produces much merriment among the Indians; now a fish slaps a redskin on the face with its tail; another one strikes against the bare ribs of some one else, which never fails to draw peals of laughter from their companions, who, in turn, become themselves the laughing-stock of the others from similar mishaps.

But the most amusing contrivance practised by these people with the *cuna* is the following: An Indian takes a quantity of boiled maize and grinds it to paste; one half of it is thoroughly incorporated with the *cuna*, while the other half he reserves as a decoy to attract the fish to a particular spot: he then calls his children, who, armed with baskets, follow their father to the stream; here the fisherman commences to throw small pellets of the unprepared paste in the water, which never fails to attract great numbers of sardines, palometas, and other delicacies, and changing suddenly his tactics, he exchanges the harmless bait for the other, which no sooner is swallowed by the fish, than they commence to turn somersaults in the

air, with other antics no less amusing to the boys, who as quickly transfer them to their baskets. It is almost incredible the amount of fish that is thus procured in a short time, enabling a poor Indian not only to supply the wants of his family, but to afford his children a lively recreation.

Still another mode of fishing, equally ingenious, is practised by the Indians when the waters commence to ebb towards the Orinoco at the end of the great floods, by means of strong stockades thrown across the outlet of the great lagunas, which are the receptacle of immense quantity of larger game, such as turtles and vagres (species of catfish) weighing from fifty to seventy-five pounds ; laulaus or valentones, from two hundred and fifty to three hundred pounds ; and above all, innumerable manatís, from five hundred to one thousand pounds. European Spaniards call this animal *Vaca Marina*, or sea cow, and the Brazilians *Peixe Boi*, ox-fish, from its feeding on grass, and other peculiarities which assimilate it to the bovine species. The manatí abounds in the Apure, the Meta, and most of the large tributaries of the Orinoco below the cataracts, and more especially in the lagoons formed by these rivers during the season of great floods, which he prefers on account of the abundant and tender food they offer them. Of this the astute Indians avail themselves to entrap them, as no sooner do the waters commence to fall than they watch attentively the channel through which the lake they have chosen as a fish-magazine—for no better name can be applied, from the finny multitude they secure there

for months—is likely to drain off. To this spot resort the entire population of the village or tribe, who immediately commence to cut stakes of the requisite length and of great thickness, to resist the onset of the formidable phalanxes of monster fishes seeking a passage to the river. The stakes are then driven in the bed of the channel close enough to permit only the exit of the water and of the smaller fish, excluding the turtles and the fish of greater magnitude. The stockade is further reinforced by cross-beams of great strength thrown across the channel, firmly secured at both ends, and resting against the stakes; and for greater security they further strengthen them by an outer row of trunks of trees driven in the ground close to the stockade. It may appear superfluous to take such precautions against the apparently defenceless hosts imprisoned within the boundaries of the lagoon; but so great and powerful are in fact the avalanches of manatís struggling against this formidable barrier, that it is often found necessary to reinforce it twice, and even three times in the course of the season.

Indeed it is scarcely credible, the number and size of the creatures secured in this manner, whole tribes of Indians subsisting for months together on the supply afforded by one of these reservoirs; but as these lagoons eventually drain off towards the close of the rainy season, and the Indians cannot exhaust them in spite of their insatiate voracity, they are compelled at last, though reluctantly, to remove the obstruction in time to allow the fish to return to the bed of the

stream before they are cut off from it; and it is asserted that on one occasion, having neglected this precaution in time, more than three thousand manatís, and a still greater number of large fish, perished in the shallow water of one of these lagoons, with the exception only of the turtles, who were, of course, in their element.

The manatí is a *herbivorous* animal of the cetaceous family, of which the whale is the type, and attains here from twelve to fifteen feet in length. Some are caught that weigh over a thousand pounds. In shape it resembles a seal somewhat, though its eyes and auricular organs are extremely small, but very acute, so much so that great care is required on the part of the fisherman who goes in pursuit of it, not to strike the sides of his canoe with the paddle and frighten the game off. Its principal means of propulsion exist in its tail, which is flat and round, from three to four feet broad, and very powerful; but it possesses in addition two pectoral fins, or armlets, situated at a proportionate distance from the head, and these enable the animal to come out of the water to browse on the rich herbage by the banks of rivers and lagoons: these armlets serve the female, in addition, to hold its young—always two in number, male and female—close to its breasts, until they are old enough to follow the mother and eat grass, their only food; and it is a curious fact, that although the mother often delights—as is the habit of these cetacea—in gambols in the water, when they sometimes jump several feet outof their element, they never lose hold of their twins.

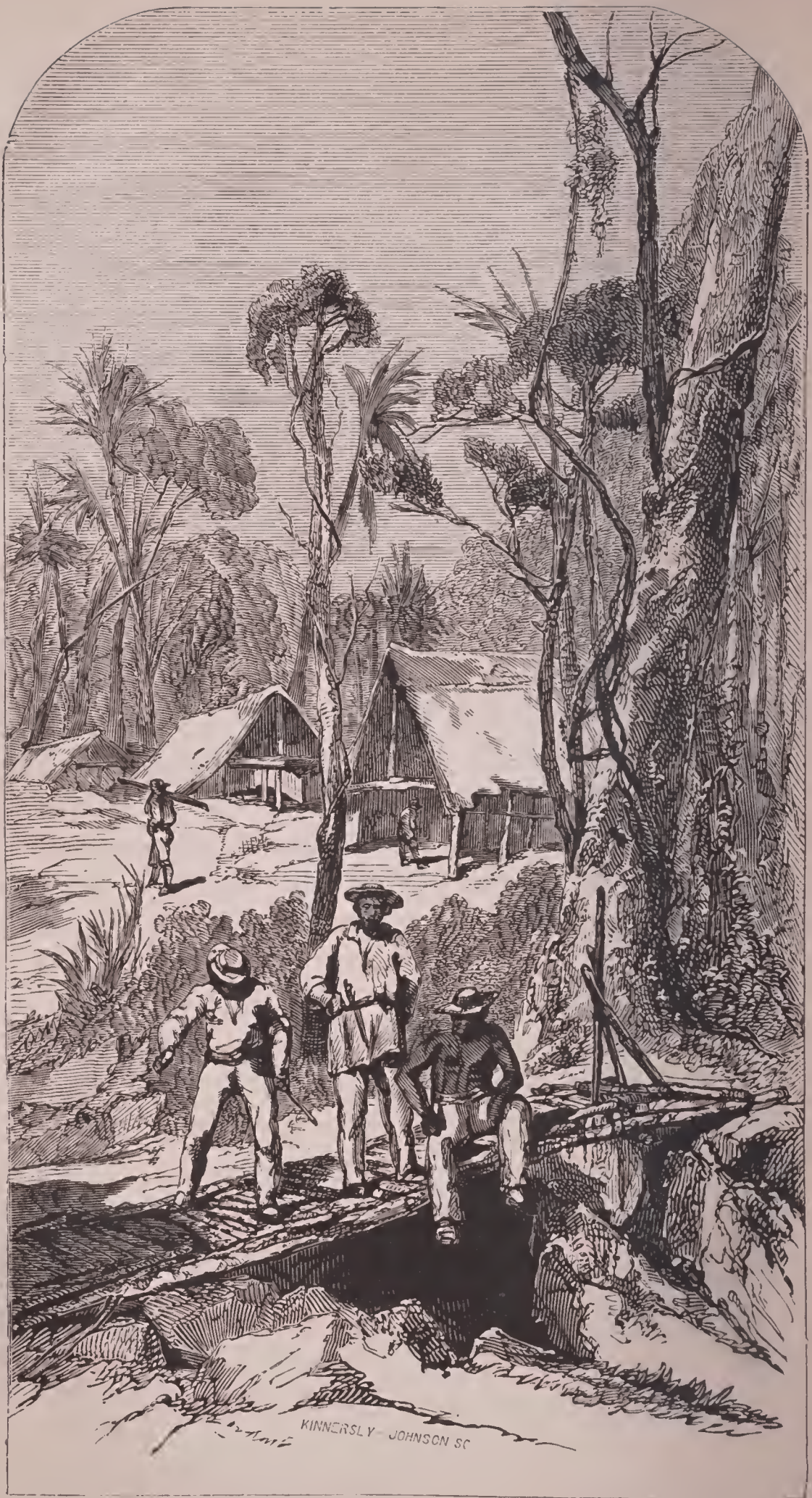
The anatomy of this fresh-water whale is very curious, according to Humboldt, who dissected one while on his way to the Orinoco. "The upper lip was four inches longer than the lower one. It was covered with a very fine skin, and served as a proboscis. The inside of the mouth, which has a *sensible* warmth in the animal newly killed, presented a very singular conformation. The tongue was almost motionless; but in front of the tongue there was a fleshy excrescence in each jaw, and a cavity lined with a very hard skin, into which the excrescence fitted. The manatí eats such quantities of grass that we have found its stomach, which is divided into several cavities, and its intestines (one hundred and eight feet long) filled with it. Opening the animal at the back, we were struck with the magnitude, form, and situation of its lungs. They have very large cells, and resemble immense swimming-bladders. They are three feet long; filled with air, they have a bulk of more than a thousand cubic inches. I was surprised to see that, possessing such receptacles of air, the manatí comes so often to the surface of the water to breathe. Its flesh is very savory, though, from what prejudice I know not, it is considered unhealthy and apt to produce fever. It appeared to me to resemble pork rather than beef. It is most esteemed by the Guamos and Ottomacs; and these two nations are particularly expert in catching the manatí. The fat of the animal, known by the name of manatí-butter (*manteca de manatí*) is used for lamps in the churches, and is also employed in preparing food. It has not the fetid smell of whale

oil, or that of the other cetaceous animals which spout water. The hide of the manatí, which is more than an inch and a half in thickness, is cut into slips, and serves, like thongs of ox-leather, to supply the place of cordage in the Llanos. When immersed in water, it has the defect of undergoing a slight degree of putrefaction. Whips are made from it in the Spanish colonies. Hence the words *latigo* and *manatí* are synonymous. These whips of manatí leather are a cruel instrument of punishment for the unhappy slaves, and even for the Indians of the Missions, though, according to the laws, the latter ought to be treated like freemen."

The address displayed by an Indian of the Orinoco in capturing with the harpoon one of these monsters and bringing it into port, with only the assistance of his wife to paddle and steer the frail canoe, is most wonderful. While the woman propels the canoe, the man stands erect at the bow, watching intently the moment when the manatí comes up to the surface to breathe, which it does every few minutes. Off flies the double-barbed harpoon from the hands of the fisherman, and implants itself in the thick hide of the doomed monster, which no sooner feels the piercing blow, than away it darts at a fearful rapidity, dragging along after it the frail canoe, to the bow of which is attached one end of the thong made from the tough hide of the manatí, while to the other end is firmly secured the iron head of the harpoon itself. After vain endeavors to avoid the danger that threatens it, now dashing rapidly against the stream for an hour or

so, now seeking the calm surface of a neighboring lagoon, during which time the sporting couple manage with difficulty to keep their seats at the bottom of the canoe, holding fast to the sides of it with both hands, the monster, bleeding and exhausted after its precipitate flight, begins at last to slacken its pace, and finally stops altogether. Now the hunter commences to pull it towards him with much caution; but no sooner does the animal perceive the dreaded canoe with its savage occupants, than off it sets anew at the same lightning speed, though this time of less duration; again the hunter pulls the game towards him, and again it endeavors to fly from him; but having lost nearly all its strength, and probably convinced of the uselessness of further efforts to escape, it now stops, rolls on its back, and calmly awaits its fate on the surface of the water. By this time the canoe is alongside of the captive, and, without further concern, the Indian cuts it open with his knife, and as soon as the water penetrates to its entrails, the great monster dies without a struggle. And now, "what shall we do with it," in the midst of a river or lagoon four or five miles in width? How is this creature—weighing perhaps a thousand pounds, and nearly as long as the canoe—to be landed safely on the shore? How can a a single man, assisted only by a frail woman, without firm ground to set their feet upon, manage to stow away the cumbrous load? Nothing easier, incredulous reader; "first catch the hare and then make the soup," and this the Indian hunter daily practises in his native wilds, without much culinary advice from

Mrs. Glass. Having secured their game, the hunters, or fishers, plunge in the water, swimming all the while with their feet and one hand, while with the other they tip over the canoe until it partly fills with water, which brings it on a level with the carcass of the manatí ; this accomplished, the rest of the operation is easily done by sliding the canoe under the carcass, and then baling out the water by means of calabash cups, which cover their heads in lieu of hats. In proportion as they bale out the water, the canoe rises above the surface, and when sufficiently high to permit its being safely navigated through the boisterous waves of the Orinoco, the husband leaps on the head of the animal and calmly takes his seat, while the wife does the same on the broad tail of the monster fish, and directing the bow of the canoe towards the shore, they paddle themselves along with their cumbrous freight, which is soon disposed of among the numerous relations and friends, who anxiously await their arrival on the beach.



SCENES AT EL DORADO—From a Photograph.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAND OF EL DORADO.

"And yet unspoiled
Guiana, whose great city Geryon's sons *
Call El Dorado."—*Paradise Lost*, Book xi.

BEFORE we quit the shores of the Apure, I will invite the reader to follow me in imagination, or, better still, in one of the many *bongos* trading between this and the Orinoco river, on to the adjoining province of Guayana, or *Guiana*, as it is more commonly known among English writers and explorers. This will give us an opportunity of gliding over one of the greatest rivers in the world, which nearly encircles a vast territory hardly known to civilized man, that is just now attracting a great deal of notice on account of the recent gold discoveries made there; a country unsurpassed in natural treasures and resources; a sort of hidden paradise which greedy gold-hunters of former times sought in vain under the

* Guerior? This was the name of a town founded at the confluence of the Paragua and Caroni rivers, long since destroyed or abandoned.—*The Author.*

gilded name of El Dorado, and which, strange to say, has remained, like the wealth of California, undiscovered until recently.

What a train of awful recollections this once magic name of El Dorado brings to mind! What tales of woe, of daring adventure and blasted hopes it has left behind for the entertainment and raillery of subsequent generations! And yet, the gallant Raleigh —Sir Walter—like Galileo before the tribunal of the Inquisition, was right in his belief that there was gold enough in Guayana to load the entire fleet of Great Britain in his time.

But let us not anticipate the narrative of events, which will come, each one in its turn. Availing ourselves, therefore, of the gentle current of the Apure, we will proceed on our journey, stopping here and there to get a shot at the enormous crocodiles—larger than any we have yet seen—which infest its waters near its confluence with the Orinoco; and perhaps also at some thirsty jaguar taking its young to drink. Humboldt has described these scenes so vividly, that I must refer the reader to the third volume of his "Travels," Bohn's edition, for further information on the subject.

Proceeding down the river, which here presents the singularity of becoming narrower, on account of infiltrations through a spongy and sandy soil, as well as other causes, we come suddenly upon a vast expanse of waters, presenting all the appearance of an agitated sea, from the conflict between breeze and current. This is the grand old river we are in

quest of, the Orinoco. "The air resounded no longer with the piercing cries of herons, flamingos, and spoonbills, crossing in long files from one shore to the other. Our eyes sought in vain those water-fowls, the habits of which vary in each climate. Scarcely could we discover in the hollows of the waves a few large crocodiles, cutting obliquely, by the help of their long tails, the surface of the agitated waters. The horizon was bounded by a zone of forests, which nowhere reached so far as the bed of the river. A vast beach, constantly parched by the heat of the sun, desert and bare as the shores of the sea, resembles at a distance, from the effects of the mirage, pools of stagnant water. In these scattered features, we recognize the course of the Orinoco, one of the most majestic rivers of the New World." *

At this point the Orinoco, already enriched with the tribute of the Guaviare, the Inirida, the Meta, and the Arauca, which, like the Apure, have their sources amidst the snowy mountains of New Granada, suddenly changes its course, and, in conjunction with the latter, flows nearly in a straight line towards the Atlantic, after describing an arc of a circle around the western portion of Guayana. The vast territory thus encompassed within its mighty embrace gives rise also to numerous other rivers hardly inferior in magnitude to the above-named, such as the Ventuari, the Cuchivero, the Paragua, the Caura, the Caroni, etc., all of which flow into the Orinoco from the

* Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America.

south, thus contributing to swell the volume of its waters to the extent that it presents by the time it reaches the ocean on the fifteenth meridian of longitude east of Washington. Our route being in this direction also, we will not follow the illustrious traveller in his laborious exploration of the Upper Orinoco, the Casiquiare and the Rio Negro. I would, however, advise those who are not conversant with his works to read his description of the *Raudales*, or Great Rapids of Atures and Maipures, which he has sketched with a masterly hand in his *Tableaux de la Nature*. The following passage, quoted from said work, will convey to the reader some idea of the magnificence of the river at that point :—

"A foaming surface of four miles in length presents itself at once to the eye : iron black masses of rock, resembling ruins and battlemented towers, rise frowning from the waters. Rocks and islands are adorned with the luxuriant vegetation of the tropical forest ; a perpetual mist hovers over the waters, and the summits of the lofty palms pierce through the clouds of spray and vapor. When the rays of the glowing evening sun are refracted in their humid exhalations, a magic optical effect begins. Colored bows shine, vanish, and reappear ; and the ethereal image is swayed to and fro by the breath of the sportive breeze. During the long rainy season, the streaming waters bring down islands of vegetable mould, and thus the naked rocks are studded with bright flower-beds adorned with melastomas and

droseras, and with silver-leaved mimosas and ferns. These spots recall to the recollection of the European those blocks of granite decked with flowers which rise solitary amidst the glaciers of Savoy, and are called by the dwellers in the Alps 'Jardins,' or 'Courtils.'"

This is the country of the India-rubber and the Brazil-nut trees, two of the most stupendous denizens of the tropical forest; of the wild cacao, the fragrant sarapia, or tonka-bean, the sassafras-laurel, the ananas or wild pine-apple, and of numberless other useful products, as well as baneful drugs; for here is gathered the mavacure-vine, from the juice of which the Indians of this region compound the most virulent poison known in nature, the *curare*, which the natives employ most effectively in procuring game by the aid of their blow-pipes. So quick and certain are its effects, that an animal wounded by one of the small arrows used for the purpose drops dead before the creature is hardly conscious of its danger; and singular enough, no evil effects whatever arise from partaking of the game thus killed; for the *curare* is perfectly harmless when taken internally.

The Raudales are at present a serious impediment to the free navigation of the river up to the frontiers of Brazil; although, as Humboldt justly remarks, this obstruction could be avoided by cutting a canal around them, the nature of the ground offering ample facilities for this purpose; but this cannot be done advantageously until the country shall be better stocked with population than at present.

Proceeding down the stream, the only town of any importance we encounter on the route is Ciudad Bolivar, formerly Angostura, which is the capital of the State of Guayana and a mart of considerable trade with the llanos of Apure, Calabozo, and Barinas. The old name of the city was changed in honor of the Liberator, Simon Bolivar, who, after expelling the Spaniards from New Granada, assembled here the first Congress which proclaimed the union of the republic of Colombia in 1819. Pleasantly situated on a bluff several feet above the high-water level of the river, about three hundred miles from the sea, and connected by its numerous tributaries with a country nearly as large as continental Europe, Ciudad Bolivar is destined to become the seat of a vast commerce, when the now almost desert region of Guayana shall have opened its golden treasures to an enterprising generation. At present it contains about ten thousand inhabitants; has a fine cathedral, government house, and very handsome private residences and warehouses. The business, according to all accounts, has fallen off greatly since the war of seven years which, under the alleged name of *Federacion*, devastated the rest of the republic. Happily for the State of Guayana, it has always been kept free from these periodical turmoils by the efforts of some truly patriotic men—among others, John B. Dalla-Costa, Jr., the present President of the State, under whose enlightened administration public improvements, roads, hospitals, schools, etc., are being established, and the nucleus of a foreign immigration started on the way

to the gold fields. The commercial houses are principally German, French, and Italian; but of late many Southern refugees from the United States have been induced to try their fortunes on the banks of the Orinoco; and, judging from past experience in the rapid development of California and Australia, through the energies of the Anglo-Saxon race, the *placers* of that golden paradise bid fair to become another centre of commercial intercourse with foreign nations.

It was from this place that the first expedition in search of El Dorado, on this side of the continent, set out in 1595. None of those composing it ever came back, however, to tell the sad tale of their discomfiture by the fierce tribes of Indians which dwelt on the fine savannas lying between the Caroni and Paragua rivers, beyond which popular belief, assisted by the traditions of the aborigines themselves, had settled definitely the existence of a region abounding in gold. Previous to this, however, the fame of El Dorado had spread over the western part of South America, and several expeditions had been fitted out in Venezuela, New Granada, Quito, and Peru, with the avowed object of conquering the wealthy empire of the Omeguas, whose sovereign, El Dorado, or the "gilded king," was represented as dwelling in palaces with columns of massive gold. The climate of that region being warm throughout the year, and the morals of the inhabitants not yet perverted by contact with their would-be civilizers, his majesty's attire, it was asserted, was in keeping with the glitter of his dominions; a simple coating of balsamiferous resins, in which the country

abounds, followed by a sprinkling of gold-dust through the hollow tube of a bamboo, twice a day, being sufficient to distinguish him from the rest of his naked subjects : hence the name. But this sort of drapery being rather uncomfortable at bed-time, it was removed every night by simply washing with water—a most delightful luxury in warm countries—and as easily replaced on the following day. Where such *embarras de richesse* could be indulged in by a demi-savage monarch, gold mines must exist in abundance ; the sands of the rivers and lakes must consist of fine gold, and the pebbles and rocks of the same precious metal. People were not, however, in perfect accord respecting the precise locality of said auriferous kingdom ; some placing it on the eastern side of Guayana, as already stated, under the name of *El Dorado de la Parime ;* others, two hundred and fifty leagues to the westward of this, near the eastern slope of the Andes of New Granada ; while not a few contended that it was situated in the country of the Omeguas, somewhere near the waters of the Upper Amazon.

Such were the vague notions concerning the country of El Dorado, which the people of former times sought in vain at the cost of many lives and vast amounts of treasure. Strange blindness ! when they had it right before their eyes ! for, as the noble missionary writer often quoted, Father Gumilla, tells us respecting the wealth of South America : "Let us ask the Englishman, Keymisco,* and other captains,

* Keymis, the lieutenant of Raleigh.

countrymen of his : Friends, what journeys are these ? for what purpose so many dangerous voyages, so many losses of treasure, ships, and sailors ? * Let us ask both Pizarros in Peru and Quito ; both Quesadas in Santa Fé de Bogotá; Orellana, on the Marañon, and Berrio on the Meta, as well as many other famous chieftains : Gentlemen, what's your hurry ? what the object of so many armaments, marches, and arduous explorations, dangerous and painful ?—'We seek,' they answer 'the famous and opulent El Dorado : let no one, therefore, be astonished at our determination and earnest purpose ; for what is worth much, must entail great sacrifices.'

"The Athenians burst into laughter when they met and heard Diogenes seeking for a man ; but they laughed most foolishly, inasmuch as the philosopher sought a man of truth only ! one who should profess it in earnest ; and it should have been a matter of shame, rather than raillery, with the men of Athens, to learn that so great a philosopher could not find one among them. But we shall not err if we laugh at the simplicity of those noble conquerors. Most singular spectacle ! To see so many Spanish chieftains stumbling at each step over an El Dorado of inexhaustible richness, as is in reality the entire new king-

* The first of the voyages undertaken at Raleigh's expense was in 1595 ; the second, that of Laurence Keymis, in 1596 ; the third, described by Thomas Masham, in 1597 ; and the fourth, in 1617. The first and the last only were performed by Raleigh in person. This celebrated man was beheaded October the 29th, 1618.—*Humboldt.*

dom of Granada, and Tierra Firme, so abundant in gold, silver, and emerald mines, such as those already found within the jurisdictions of Pamplona, Mariquita, Muso, Neiva, Los Remedios, Antioquia, Anserma, Choco, Barvacoas, and a great many more which are waiting to be brought to light, as is indicated by the golden sands carried down by rivers and torrents from the mountains; thus showing their willingness to be disentombed. Therefore, if there are so many scores of Dorados, immensely rich and superabundant, only waiting to be worked; why so much restlessness, so much expenditure and wandering after a Dorado? What need had Peru to risk her militia in unknown regions to suffer and perish in pursuit of a Dorado, while she possesses the unrivalled golden fields of Caravalla, with many others? And the inexhaustible silver mountain of Potosi, to say nothing of other veins of the same metal, almost innumerable, though less prolific? It was indeed a singular idea to seek abroad, at great cost of life and treasure, the very thing they possessed at home." *

Nothing in the history of modern adventure can compare in hardihood, determination, and reckless disregard of life, with those haphazard undertakings

* The predictions of the old Missionary of the Orinoco have been singularly verified in these latter times by the still more recent discoveries in Peru; for, as I write this, the news comes from that country that, in the mountains of Chanchamayo, Upper Amazon, "some gold mines have been discovered, which, for their abundance and richness, surpass those of California."—*Nacional*, of Lima.

in the heart of South America which, although proving invariably most disastrous to their promoters, resulted ultimately in a real benefit to the colonial possessions of Spain in the New World, by extending the geographical knowledge of those regions. To fully comprehend the nature of the task which these adventurers imposed upon themselves, it will suffice to say, with regard to Venezuela, that few spots only, and these far apart, were then occupied by Europeans along its extensive sea-coast. The thirst for gold, which characterized the spirit of the time, and the reputation the country enjoyed for the precious metal, as well as for the fine pearls obtained at Margarita and other places, had attracted thither a crowd of lawless adventurers from all parts of Europe, but more especially from Germany—the Emperor Charles the Fifth having, in an evil hour, granted to a company of Teutonic speculators all the territory comprised between Cabo de la Vela and Maracapana, with privilege to capture and use as slaves all those of the native inhabitants who should resist their exactions. The power thus conferred on those merciless adventurers was freely used by them to enslave the doomed lords of the land, who were hunted like wild beasts in all directions, and quickly transported to the mines of Hispaniola, or Saint Domingo, where they perished by thousands, the native population of that island having already been exterminated in this manner. To accomplish their work more effectually, expeditions were organized and despatched to all parts of the country, some of which penetrated beyond the llanos

of Apure, Casanare, and Meta, as far as the Caqueta and Putumayo, tributary rivers of the Upper Amazon. Others, still more bold, disregarding the frigid blasts of the Sierra Nevada, with its dizzy precipices and yawning chasms, sought the "Land of gold" in a westerly direction, fighting their way not only against a frowning nature, but also against the hardy mountain tribes, who disputed every inch of ground to the bearded invaders. It was in this manner that the rich domain of Cundinamarca, in New Granada, was made known to the colonists of Venezuela, by Nicholas Federmann, in 1539, although Jimenez de Quesada had preceded him, and Sebastian de Benalcazar, by the way of the river Magdalena from the coast of Cartagena.

"The junction of three bodies of troops on the table-land of New Granada," says Humboldt, "spread through all that part of America occupied by the Spaniards the news of an immensely rich and populous country, which remained to be conquered. Sebastian de Benalcazar marched from Quito by way of Popayan (1536) to Bogotá; Nicolas Federmann, coming from Venezuela, arrived from the east by the plains of Casanare and Meta. These two captains found, already settled on the table-land of Cundinamarca, the famous Adelantado Gonzalo Jimenez de Quesada, one of whose descendants I saw near Zipaquirá, with bare feet, attending cattle. The fortuitous meeting of the three conquistadores, one of the most extraordinary and dramatic events of the history of the conquest, took place in 1536."

No better avenger of the wrongs perpetrated on

the unfortunate aborigines could have been provided against their merciless persecutors, than this phantom of untold wealth, which, like the fugitive fountain before Tantalus, haunted them day and night, in the camp of the wearied soldier, in the alcove of the proud Hidalgo, and even in the quiet seclusion of the cloister. And yet one cannot but admire the pluck of those hardy cavaliers of old who, regardless of the almost insuperable difficulties presented by an unknown and savage country, went boldly in search of this new Ophir over lofty mountain ranges and desert plains, which, even at this day, are the terror of the wayfarer. Three centuries later, when Bolivar, with a well-appointed army and better roads than Federmann met in his famous expedition, crossed the Cordilleras from the plains of Venezuela, and undertook the recovery of New Granada from the Spaniards in 1819, he lost nearly all his baggage-mules, and many valuable lives besides, amidst the wintry *páramos* of that tempestuous ridge.

Of the earliest expeditions in search of El Dorado, those undertaken by Jorge de Spira in 1534, and by Felipe de Urre or Utre,* in 1541, from the coast of Coro, Venezuela, rank among the most extraordinary on record. The former of these worthies had received the title of *adelantado*, or governor, to the German colony in Tierra Firme, a dignity which was associated in those days with the more vainglorious aspirations

* Jorge de Spira (George von Speier) and Felipe de Utre (Utre, Von Huten), as well as Federmann, were all Germans.

of the conqueror, or *conquistador*, and to this end were directed, more or less, all the efforts of the men appointed to places of distinction in the New World, without neglecting to provide themselves with the more substantial perquisities of the fraternity in the shape of Indian captives, pearls, and gold. Accordingly, the Adelantado took especial care to bring with him from Spain a force of about four hundred men, many of whom were persons of distinction, and landed in Coro in the early part of February of that year.

Without troubling himself much about the affairs of the colony, the new Adelantado proceeded immediately to scour the country in search of gold ; but finding none amongst the savage tribes he encountered beyond the mountains of the coast, boldly plunged into the *mare magnum* of the llanos, in spite of the opposition of the natives and the asperity of the route. The vernal deluge of the low lands, however, put a stop in due time to further progress, compelling him to seek the protection of the hilly country to the westward, where years after was founded the city of Barinas. Here he spent several months waiting for the return of the dry season, and in vain endeavors to obtain provisions in a country solely inhabited by savage tribes, that did not disdain to confront the superior mettle of his men whenever they had a chance. Reduced at last to the greatest extremity by famine and sickness, the Governor despatched a portion of his force under one of his most tried captains, with orders to penetrate into the valleys formed by the lofty range of mountains further west.

Goaded by hunger, and with the hope of finding more promising realms than those they had encountered on the route from Coro, the soldiers of Spira did not stop until they discovered on a high mountain what seemed to be the granary of the tribes appertaining to that district, which they were not slow in transporting to headquarters. Somewhat restored with this opportune supply of food, and not in the least daunted by the dangers that threatened him, Spira resolved to proceed on his forlorn journey, sending back to Coro the sick and wounded under a competent escort, which was to rejoin him in his camp. This accomplished, the Adelantado resumed his march across the plains in a southward direction. Keeping in sight of the western cordillera, and guided by the celestial constellations at night, Spira and his brave companions presented the spectacle so well described by Goldsmith in the following lines :—

> "To distant climes, a dreary scene,
> Where half the convex world intrudes between,
> Through torrid tracks with fainting step they go."
> *The Deserted Village.*

After several months of arduous vicissitudes, when they nearly all perished for want of provisions, subsisting in the mean time on the tender shoots of heliconias and the most loathsome reptiles, they stopped at last on the banks of the river Upia, having crossed many others of no less consequence, such as the Apure, the Sarare, and the Casanare, by what means the chronicles of the time do not tell us. Completely exhausted now, and again threatened by

the approaching rainy season, the weary caravan prepared to winter there, selecting for the purpose some high ground near a forest, upon which they built huts and considered themselves secure against the vernal flood. Vain precautions! The thundering voice of the tropical tempest made itself heard at length, and neither human ingenuity, nor high bank, nor tangled forest, could turn aside the mighty swell which, like a partial deluge, sweeps over the boundless plain at the vernal equinox. Thus the bold Castilians, after courageously braving the terrors of a savage country for nearly two years, found themselves reduced to a small space of dry land, and in danger of being washed away at any moment. Ignorant of the ways, and badly provided with the necessary appliances for procuring game in a country so profusely endowed with this commodity, they were still compelled to subsist on wild fruits and roots; even these could not be procured but at the peril of ravenous jaguars, which, like themselves, had been driven thither by the engulfing inundation. More skilled in the art of swimming and navigating those waters, the vengeful Indians watched stealthily every opportunity to pick off stragglers from the camp; and thus many of those poor wretches were spared the horrors of a lingering death by starvation, sickness, and despair. Yet, the unconquerable spirit of their leader, far from yielding to the force of circumstances, and wholly impressed with visions of a golden paradise, only seemed to urge him on still farther in the unknown interior; for no sooner was he released from his long confinement by

the subsidence of the waters, than Spira crossed over to the south side of the river, and proceeded on his journey, through innumerable hostile tribes of Indians, who annoyed him considerably on his march. During his wanderings over those immeasurable wilds, Spira obtained from an Indian captive some informati n respecting more prosperous and populated lands to the westward, the inhabitants of which were clad in fine cotton fabrics, and wore ornaments of gold, showing a higher grade of civilization than that of the savages he had encountered. Although at first he lent a willing ear to the story, and even sent a strong body of men to reconnoitre the lofty mountain range beyond, the Adelantado desisted from his projected conquest in that direction, owing to the rugged nature of the route, as reported by his men, and the little faith he placed on such statements from Indian informers. The fact is, the Spaniards had proved such troublesome guests, that the aborigines, to get rid of them, and perceiving their eagerness for gold, constantly allured them towards the wealth of other countries, situated farther off. Had Spira, on this occasion, followed the advice of his informant, instead of persisting, as he did, in his southern exploration, he would, in a short time, have found the promised land of his expectations—the rich and fertile country of the Muiscas, in one word, for he was then only a few days' march from their own capital on the high table-land of Bogotá. His bad luck led him instead to a region so exactly the reverse of this, that his companions gave it the name of *Mal Pais* (bad coun-

try), not only on account of the roughness of the land, but also of its inhabitants, with whom they had several desperate engagements, before they were enabled to proceed.

Without losing sight of the friendly cordillera which had guided their steps thus far, the Spaniards arrived at the village of a less pugnacious tribe of Indians, which they christened with the name of *Nuestra Señora*, or Our Lady, in commemoration of the Feast of the Assumption, which they, in spite of their wretched condition, celebrated with great pomp and rejoicings, in 1537. It is the same where they afterwards founded the city of San Juan de los Llanos.* Here the Spaniards heard again of regions abounding in gold and silver, situated farther on ; and although they had become rather incredulous respecting such reports, they believed, on this occasion, what the Indians told them, in consequence of finding there some signs of a more advanced state of civilization, such as a temple, consecrated to the sun, and a convent of virgins similar to those which were afterwards found among the Muiscas and Peruvians. Without stopping even to rest his troop, Spira crossed the Ariari, perhaps higher up than Macatoa, and before its junction with the Guaviare. He then penetrated, by force of arms, into the country of the Guayupes and Canicamares, two powerful tribes, and shortly afterwards he discovered the head waters of the Papamene, where he stopped some days to rest his men, and to obtain

* See map, at frontispiece.

guides among the Indians to conduct him to the country of riches. The dwellers of Papamene received Spira in a friendly manner, and established with his soldiers a system of exchanges and communication most acceptable on both sides ; the strangers obtaining by these means the provisions they were in need of, and the Indians those trinkets of foreign manufacture so highly prized by them. But, tired at last of their troublesome guests, the aborigines persuaded them that a little further on they would find the country they were in quest of. To encourage them still more, five of the natives volunteered to act as guides, pledging themselves to lead them shortly to the heart of that happy country, from whence they would return loaded with riches. Instead of this, the wily Indians conducted them to a dismal labyrinth of swamps and quicksands, the abode of a ferocious and warlike nation, dexterous in battle and in the management of formidable lances of palm-wood, tipped with blades of human bone, very sharp and pointed. When once in the heart of this horrid wilderness, the guides disappeared one night, and left their friends to shift for themselves.

Not in the least disconcerted by the untoward contretemps, the stubborn leader of the band, instead of retracing his steps, prepared at once to make a thorough exploration of that region. To this end he detailed his lieutenant, Esteban Martin—a well tried and competent individual—with fifty infantry and twenty horsemen, to reconnoitre the position. Martin soon discovered the difficulties of the undertaking,

and the dangers to which they all would be exposed if the Governor persisted in his project. After an ineffectual reconnoisance of five days' duration, when men and horses were constantly in danger of being swallowed up by the treacherous ground, he returned to the camp, and again endeavored to dissuade the Governor from his foolhardy scheme; but Spira was deaf to the timely advice of his lieutenant. Ordering him to leave behind the horses, and to take the fifty men already allotted to the service, he enjoined Martin to resume the reconnoisance forthwith, by a different route.

The result of the foray was just as the lieutenant had foreseen. The Indians allowed them to penetrate unmolested into the interior of their stronghold, and then cut them up in detail. Although the Spaniards fought like lions on this occasion, very few of them were fortunate enough to reach headquarters, to apprise the stubborn Governor of his danger. It became now necessary to effect a retreat from that den of horrors which the Spaniards stigmatized with the appropriate name of *Los Choques*—the Onslaughts—in allusion to the repeated attacks which the enemy made upon them while endeavoring to accomplish their escape. Unfortunately for the invaders, as they were then very near the line of the equator, where it rains almost incessantly, they had to contend also against the inclemency of the weather, which brought on a multitude of diseases very fatal to men and horses; for they had neither the means nor the physical strength to counteract them. Thus many of these brave fel-

lows became a prey to the distemper, among them several distinguished individuals, whose names are given by Oviedo in his "Historia de la Conquista," such as Francisco Murcia de Rondon, who had acted as secretary to King Francis the First of France during his captivity in Spain.

The most difficult part of the undertaking remained yet to be accomplished, namely, that of retracing their steps to the sea-coast through a flooded and deserted country; for, with the previous experience of the natives, the villages were abandoned at the approach of the dreaded foreigners, and stripped of their provisions. So great was the destitution among the followers of Spira, that, on one occasion, a party of his men fell in with an infant, left forsaken by its mother in the hurry of the moment after a surprise; and, without the least compunction, they devoured it along with some edible roots found in the hut. When Spira heard of it he would have made an example of the cannibals on the spot; but considering that he was still in an enemy's country, and that he could not very well spare the men—four in number—he commuted the sentence of death passed upon them to some other, though quite severe punishment. They all, however, got their deserts after a while; for, as the historiographer Oviedo tells us, every one of them died in the most distressing agony—although of various diseases—at the thought of the horrid crime they had committed.

A whole year was spent in this disastrous retreat, which, more than any other feat of arms, proved the

mettle of the bold conquerors. The remnants of what was a dashing phalanx—ninety men out of the four hundred that five years before had started in search of wealth and fame—reached Coro in February of 1539 ; and these, far from being discouraged by past misfortunes, only inflamed the ardor of other incautious adventurers to join themin a renewed search for El Dorado ; for we find Felipe de Urre and Pedro de Limpias, two of Spira's followers, engaging in a similar expedition soon after the return of this ill-fated conquistador, who did not long survive the hardships of that fearful journey, for he died in Coro on the 12th of June, 1540. His successor, as Governor of the colony, Bishop de las Bastidas, whose mission as a prelate of the church should have been one of "peace on earth, and good-will to men," far from discountenancing these reckless enterprises, became himself a most ardent votary of the "gilded king," to whom he prepared to pay his respects through his lieutenant, the famous conquistador, Felipe de Urre, like Spira and Federmann, of German nationality. The exchequer of the colony being rather short of funds at the time, the Right Reverend sent an expedition under Pedro de Limpias, to the lake of Maracaibo, for the purpose of obtaining its equivalent in the shape of Indian captives, a species of merchandise which commanded a ready sale among the traders on the coast of Tierra Firme. The speculation succeeded so well that, by the month of June, 1541, the Commander-in-chief was ready to start at the head of one hundred and fifty men, well armed and equipped for

a protracted campaign. Urre appointed as his chief of staff the ubiquitous Pedro de Limpias, a brave and crafty adventurer, long experienced in Indian forays, especially that of the unfortunate Jorge de Spira, and afterwards under Federmann, during his perilous journey over the icy Sierras of Cundinamarca.

The only pass through the northern cordillera then known to the colonists was that of Agua-Caliente, a little to the south of the present site of Puerto Cabello, and the same that Spira and Federmann sought some years before in their march through to the Llanos. This pass being situated some fifty leagues east of Coro, and no roads existing at that time, the little band of Felipe de Urre had to follow the coast-line intervening between both places, with no small inconvenience to men and beasts, from the burning sands and the quagmires they must have encountered.

The route being pretty well known already, Urre had no difficulty in finding the pass; and then following the line of march of his predecessors in their famous perambulations through the Llanos, he reached La Fragua, or Nuestra Señora, in safety, stopping there for a while until the return of the dry season, and to obtain further information respecting the mysterious land he was in quest of. His astonishment was great, however, when he heard that, a few days before, Hernan Perez de Quesada, with a large force from Cundinamarca, had passed through that place in quest of El Dorado. Fearing that the Spaniard might get ahead of him in this coveted conquest, Urre left his winter quarters sooner than he had cal-

culated, and reached the country of Papamene. From thence he might have gained easy access to the populous and well-stocked country of the Guayupes, but for his obstinacy in keeping the track of Quesada in his march southward. Although warned in time of the dangers of this route by a friendly Indian, who offered to conduct him instead to the rich domain of Macatoa in a south-easterly direction, the stubborn German still persisted in his purpose, with no better luck than his rival; who barely escaped with his life, and the loss of the greater portion of his followers, to the high table-land of Papayan, after two years of wanderings and vicissitudes through the most dismal solitudes and tangled forests.

Compelled by the approaching rainy season to seek also the proximity of the mountains, and with most of his force in a deplorable condition, Urre hastened to establish his winter quarters on a spur of the Andes, which stretches far into the low lands, and was named by them the Punta, or Cape of Los Pardaos. But here an unexpected misfortune awaited them; for the district being scarcely inhabited, they could find no provisions during their long wintry captivity; subsisting, like Spira and his men, on reptiles and the like. The greatest luxury they enjoyed at times was a ball of corn-meal, well seasoned with a species of red-ants, and roasted on the embers. The game was easily secured by placing the moist paste near the mouth of the ant-nest, which soon attracted the insects, and when well covered with them, they were kneaded together, the same operation being re-

peated several times, until the roll contained more insects than paste. Reduced, in consequence, to the condition of walking skeletons, and most of them covered with the most loathsome tumors and ulcers, the forlorn wanderers could hardly extricate themselves from that theatre of their misfortunes, when the subsidence of the waters allowed them to seek their old quarters at La Fragua, to recruit before engaging in new adventures.

Although the force had dwindled down to less than half the number of those originally brought from Coro, Felipe de Urre determined to resume his explorations with only forty men, which was all that could be got together, after leaving a sufficient number at La Fragua for the protection of the sick. Remembering the advice given him by the Indian guide of Papamene to look for the country of the Omeguas in a different direction from that taken by Quesada in his perilous pilgrimage, Urre set out in quest of Macatoa —situated on the right bank of the great river Guaviare—as the most convenient centre for future operations against the warlike Omeguas.

Whether it was indifference on the part of the Indians, or a preconcerted plan to bring their common enemy to speedy destruction at the hands of the Omeguas, the most powerful nation among them, the fact is, that the invaders found no difficulty in penetrating as far as Macatoa by the help of Indian guides and assistance. In like manner the lord of Macatoa, on being informed of the purpose which had brought the strangers thus far, received them with every

demonstration of friendship, giving up to them the most commodious residences in the town, and assisting them with provisions and attendants in abundance. The same courtesies were extended to them at their departure, although the Cacique warned his guests of the perils they would encounter if they persisted in attacking the Omeguas with so small a force. In order to expedite their march, the Cacique sent messengers ahead to apprise the lord of the next tribe, his ally—situated some nine days' journey from Macatoa—of their coming, and recommending them strongly to his care and attention. On arriving there, so captivated were the inhabitants with the novelty of the strangers and their attire, especially with the horses, that they became even more obsequious than the people of Macatoa, and, like these, warned the leader of that squad of adventurers not to engage in so desperate a combat with the Omeguas, representing likewise to Felipe de Urre that these people possessed also domestic quadrupeds of large size—probably llamas—which they could use like horses if they chose. In addition to these facts the Spaniards were reassured of the immense wealth in gold and silver everywhere to be found among that populous nation, which news so excited their avarice that, disregarding all the chances against the success of their enterprise, they hastened towards the goal of their expectations.

Perceiving that his arguments were of no avail with the Castilians, to deter them from their rash undertaking, the friendly Cacique offered to escort them with a few of his subjects, on the road to the nation

of the Omeguas, reaching the first of their outposts in five days. It is related by the chronicles that, having ascended some high ground near by, the Spaniards descried a city of such extraordinary extent and magnificence, that, although not very far off, they could not see the end of it. The streets were straight, and the buildings quite near each other; among the latter was to be seen a superb edifice of vast proportions, which the friendly Cacique told them was the palace of the lord of that city, whose name was Cuarica; and that it served the double function of habitation to his lordship, and temple to many gods, or idols, of solid gold.

Here the Cacique, having accomplished his errand, proposed to return to his own dominions; but before taking leave of his *protegés*, he advised Urre, as a last token of his regard, to capture, at all hazards, the men stationed at the post, before they should carry the alarm into the city. The suggestion was fully appreciated by the Commander and some officers near him, all of whom being on horseback at that moment, immediately gave chase to the fugitive Omeguas. One of these, finding himself hard pressed by Urre, who rode ahead of his companions, turned round suddenly, and struck the Commander so powerful a blow with his lance, that it pierced right through his cuirass, penetrating deeply into the ribs of the right side. Disconcerted with the blow, and the pain inflicted by the wound, Urre abandoned the pursuit, and turned back to rejoin his companions, while the fugitives made their escape into the city.

Greatly perplexed with this unexpected mishap to their Commander, and fearing that, alarmed with the report carried by the advanced guard into the city, the Omeguas would immediately sally forth to encounter them in great numbers, the Spaniards, by the advice of their friendly Indian guide, who still remained by them, placing their wounded leader in a hammock, resolved to retire at once from the neighborhood. Their apprehensions were soon realized ; for, in a little while, they heard the confused yells of the multitude, amidst the ominous booming of big drums and other war instruments, preparing for the attack. Happily for the retreating Spaniards, night came on soon after, which enabled them to place a good distance between themselves and the advancing columns of the enemy.

On arriving at the village of their good friend the Cacique, the first care was to attend to the chieftain's wound, as well as circumstances would permit ; but hardly were they established here, when the Cacique, apprised by some of his people who were working on their fields, informed Urre of the approach of the Omeguas. Unable to place himself at the head of his soldiers, the Commander ordered his lieutenant, Pedro de Limpias, to give them battle at once, regardless of their numbers, which, according to Oviedo, amounted to not less than fifteen thousand. The ground being favorable for the use of cavalry, Limpias headed the charge with the few horses he had at his command ; and although the Omeguas resisted for some time the onset of those animals,—seen by them for the first time,

—they at last commenced to give way; and the infantry soldiers coming up at this moment under the orders of another brave captain, one Bartolomé Belzar, completed the rout of the clamorous hosts of Omeguas, who have never since, to this day, been heard of; for Urre lost his life afterwards at the hands of a tyrant who ruled the colony in his absence, as we shall see presently; and the country remains still a perfect *terra incognita*, although several attempts were made subsequently from Perú and Quito to find that mysterious land.

Convinced that, with the small force at his disposal, it would have been more than rashness to undertake the conquest of a city which, on so short a notice, could raise fifteen thousand warriors, Urre determined—so soon as his wound permitted him to mount his horse—to return to Macatoa, and hence to La Fragua, which he reached after an absence of three months. Great was the joy in the invalid camp of the Spaniards, on the return of their friends; but greater still, at the good tidings they brought of having found the long-sought-for realms of El Dorado; for they had not the least doubt in their minds that such was the country of the powerful nation whose great city they had looked on with anxious eyes, but dared not enter.

It is a singular coincidence that, while Gonzalo Pizarro was engaged about this time in his ill-fated exploration of the country of Canelos, the land of cinnamon-trees, he heard from the Indians of Muchifaro, that not far from there—somewhat in the direc-

tion of Félipe de Urre's discoveries—a great Sire, most opulent in subjects and riches, and whose name was Omeguas, or Omaguas, had his realms ; Pizarro sent in consequence his kinsman and confidential friend, Francisco Orellana, to explore that region, with fifty men, who were launched upon the swift current of the river Napo in a frail barge, constructed in the wilderness, of very rude materials. But Orellana, probably disgusted by this time with the sufferings already endured, instead of searching for the "rich and fruitful land abounding with gold," abandoned himself and his companions to the current of the stream—one of the greatest tributaries of the mighty Amazon—and once on the bosom of the Father of Waters, sought the broad Atlantic, which he reached in safety after a run of two thousand miles. "But it is marvellous," Prescott says, "that he should escape shipwreck in the perilous and unknown navigation of that river. Many times his vessel was nearly dashed to pieces, on its rocks and in its furious rapids ; and he was in still greater peril from the warlike tribes on its borders, who fell on his little troop whenever he attempted to land, and followed in his wake for miles in their canoes." *

The sufferings endured by Pizarro and his men on this occasion, remind us of the miserable condition of Jorge de Spira and Felipe de Urre on their retrograde march to Coro. "Every scrap of provisions had been long since consumed. The last of their horses had

* Conquest of Peru, vol. ii., p. 164.

been devoured. To appease the gnawings of hunger, they were fain to eat the leather of their saddles and belts. The woods supplied them with scanty sustenance, and they greedily fed upon toads, serpents, and such other reptiles as they occasionally found."

But to return to the way-worn company under the German leader, Urre, whom we left in rather a bad plight at their haven of La Fragua. After a deliberate consultation among the principal captains of the band, it was unanimously resolved to send to Coro for reinforcements, and Pedro de Limpias having offered his services to that effect, he was despatched forthwith by Felipe de Urre with a good portion of his force as an escort; but suspecting, soon after, some evil intentions on the part of his lieutenant, who was always at loggerheads with the German element of the troop, the Commander followed him soon after, with the rest of the men.

Subsequent events proved that the apprehensions of the gallant German were not unfounded; for on his approach to the settlements of the colony, he learned that the government thereof had passed into the hands of an usurper, a crafty lawyer, named Carvajal, Relator or Recorder of the Audiencia of San Domingo, who, by forgery of despatches from that body, had managed to appoint himself Governor, in the absence of the lawful incumbent of the post. Felipe de Urre was, moreover, warned by his friends of the machinations of his lieutenant, who, instead of demanding the requisite contingent of men and horses to prosecute his conquests, was plotting his

destruction, and that of his countrymen, with the wily Carvajal. This individual, whom all accounts represent as an unscrupulous tyrant and most accomplished hypocrite, succeeded, nevertheless, in disarming Urre and his adherents, all of whom he had the effrontery to put to death, on some specious pretext concocted between himself and the spiteful Pedro de Limpias.

Thus fell one of the bravest pioneers of South America, and a most disinterested champion of its early colonization. "None of the chieftains," says Oviedo, "of the many that warred in the Indies, stained his sword with blood less than he; for, having overrun more provinces than any one else in his protracted journey of four years' duration, his moderation was impelled to war only when he found no other means to obtain peace."

But the tyrannical rule of his murderer, Carvajal, was only of short duration; for about this time the Emperor Charles the Fifth, cognizant of the excesses practised against the unhappy aborigines—through the representations of their zealous defender, the celebrated Father Las Casas—and the deplorable state into which the country had fallen under the bad management of the German company, annulled the charter granted to the latter, and sent an eminent jurist, the Licentiate de Tolosa, with full powers to regulate the affairs of the colony as Governor and Captain-General thereof. On his arrival at Coro, Tolosa was soon posted in regard to the conduct of the usurper Carvajal, who, for greater security, kept himself at a distance from the sea-coast, in the new settlement of

Tocuyo, far away in the interior. The Captain-General managed things so well, however, that he contrived to pounce upon the wretch, one night, when least expected; and having tried, and found him guilty of the crimes imputed to him, he sentenced him to be hanged—after being dragged on a hide through the streets of the town—from the same tree, a splendid Ceiba, or silk-cotton tree, in the centre of the plaza, which the tyrant had polluted with his numberless atrocities, making use of it as a gibbet during his executions.

We shall not follow the other conquerors in their restless search for El Dorado, now in one direction, now in an opposite quarter, until it was brought within the embrace of the mighty Orinoco, where Raleigh's last adventure was terminated by his unsuccessful atrack upon Santo Tomé de la Angostura, the present Ciudad Bolivar, where we must resume our journey.

Although the river has been well known for the last three hundred years, the country within its boundaries, properly called Guayana, has remained comparatively ignored by the outside world until these latter years. A few settlements along its southern shore, and these principally controlled by priestly exclusiveness, was all the advancement that had been made there up to the destruction of the missions by the war of independence. Since then the country had nearly returned to its primeval state of savageness, when the "gold fever," that most potent excitant

of all distempers, aroused the lethargic apathy of the inhabitants, and now bids fair to communicate itself to people of keener sensibilities.

It is possible that the missionary fathers, who had for a long time entire control of the scattered villages south of the Orinoco, were well informed respecting the existence of the gold fields which are being brought to light just now; but the *frailes*—all of them European Spaniards, and consequently strong supporters of their cause—were wantonly massacred by some staff officers of General Bolivar, and not one of them left to reveal the source of their reputed wealth. And, what is most singular, the learned Humboldt, who explored the Orinoco in nearly its whole course, devotes an entire chapter to prove the non-existence of gold in Guayana, especially on the spot where it has been found in the greatest abundance; although, with his characteristic reserve and far-seeing perspicuity, he concludes with these words:

"Though the celebrity of the riches of Spanish Guiana is chiefly assignable to the geographical situation of the country and the errors of the old maps, we are not justified in denying the existence of any auriferous land in the tract of country of 82,000 square leagues (250,000 square miles), which stretches between the Orinoco and the Amazon, on the east of the Andes of Quito and New Granada. What I saw of this country between the second and eighth degrees of longitude, is entirely composed of granite, and of a gneiss passing into micaceous and talcous slate. These

rocks appear naked in the lofty mountains of Parima, as well as in the plains of the Atabapo and the Casiquiare. Granite predominates there over the other rocks: and though in both continents, the *granite of ancient formation* is pretty generally destitute of gold ore, we cannot hence conclude that the granite of Parima contains no vein, no stratum of auriferous quartz."

The error of the great traveller in this respect is assignable to the fact that he never left the bed of the Orinoco, which is bordered, as he states, by ledges of primitive formation. The auriferous deposits of the State of Guayana are found in a range of mountains, having a general course north-east and south-west, about a hundred miles south of the Orinoco river, precisely where Sir Walter Raleigh placed his *El Dorado de la Parime.*

Through the courtesy of J. B. Austin, Esq., of Philadelphia—a gentleman of refined cultivation and thorough American energy, who has lately returned from that region—I am enabled to place before my readers the subjoined letter, containing an accurate statement concerning the so-called "fabulous" realms of El Dorado,* as they now are:

"The streams having their sources in these moun-

All fables have some real foundation; that of El Dorado resembles those myths of antiquity which, travelling from country to country, have been successively adapted to different localities."—*Humboldt*, vol. iii., p. 26, *Bohn's Edition.*

tains, generally flow into the Cuyuni and Masaruny rivers, tributaries of the Esequibo, though some run into the Caroni, one of the great tributaries of the Orinoco. As these gold deposits are approached, the geological features of the country undergo an important change. Quartz appears in immense quantities, running in broad veins through the savannas, or thickly distributed over great extents. This is often auriferous to a slight degree. South of the Yuruary river the system of plains is left behind, and here are ranges of hills and mountains covered with dense, gloomy, tropical forests, and intersected with numerous streams and rivers. The principal formation, or 'country rock,' is highly metamorphosed talcose and chloritic slates, broken often by upheavals of granite, and traversed by veins and ledges of quartz, from thirty inches to ninety feet wide. All this is auriferous, free gold in quartz, and of a richness incredible, until seen and explored. The earth, rocks, and beds of streams all yield gold in the greatest profusion, and over ten thousand men are now at work there without any scientific direction, and with the poorest appliances for labor, but all doing well, many accumulating large sums of money. Every part of their labor is by hand, and their tools and implements of the most ordinary character.

"Here is timber sufficient for ages of consumption; abundant supplies of water; a quiet, orderly people; good government, and deposits of gold apparently inexhaustible. It seems strange that such a country has remained so far hidden for such a length of time.

It was known to the aborigines, for we find their old pits, implements and pottery. Even as late as the time of Sir Walter Raleigh it was known to the Indians, and that gallant leader made four attempts to penetrate its fastnesses, but each time was driven back by the Spaniards. Evidently it was known to the Capuchin fathers, who colonized and christianized that section of South America; but by them it was held as a great secret, and upon their overthrow and massacre, in 1815, the trace was lost, until accidentally discovered again a few years since.

"It is a remarkable fact also, that the State of Guayana, since the date of its independence from Spain in 1812, has remained free from those internal dissensions and strifes so common in South American states. Its inhabitants are orderly, honest, and industrious; their pursuits pastoral and agricultural, and its rulers men of great political ability and enlarged liberal views.

"The climate of the State is salubrious, and the communications with the mines good; wagons can pass from the river to them in five days, and steamers run every fortnight from the river to England and France in eighteen days, and monthly to New York in twelve days.

"In a scientific point of view the country is most interesting. It is emphatically an unexplored field; its geology, natural history, and botany, almost unknown; pictorially it is very beautiful; protection to life and property absolutely safe; and though some-

what rough in its accommodations, still most interesting to the traveller.

"With such unbounded sources of wealth within its borders, so accessible to the great centres of commerce, and under such an enlightened administration of public affairs, it requires no gift of prophecy to foresee the rapidity of development now opening for the great and prosperous State of Guayana.

"The scenery throughout the canton of Upata partakes more of the pastoral character, its most marked feature being quiet beauty. There are places, such as the site of the mission of Santa Maria, the approach to the Yuruary from Guacipati, the great palm forests near Palmar, and the mountain range of Nuri, which are grand, even sublime; but generally the scene is more park-like, the mountain forms quiet, the savannas sweeping off in long swells, with trees scattered over them singly, in groups, or groves, seemingly as if planted by man for pictorial effect. The valleys are fertile and luxuriant—all the productions of the tropical zone maturing almost without labor; the savannas furnish rich pasturage for tens of thousands of cattle—the forests are prolific in woods of the greatest value—the streams rapid, and their water good.

"The auriferous deposits beyond the Yuruary have been traced from that river through to the Ventuari, about four hundred miles; not, for all this distance, by continuous exploration, but in detached efforts, penetrating from the Orinoco at various points, and always striking the same general system of veins."

As I understand that Mr. Austin is engaged in writing a book on this important subject, I abstain from further comments in the matter, convinced as I am, that no one is better calculated than himself to enlighten his countrymen respecting a region eminently adapted to the enterprising energy of the Anglo-Saxon race.

"Son árboles y piedras un tesoro,
Los montes plata y las arenas oro."

BARALT, *Oda á Colon.*

In its trees and its stones are treasures untold,
Its mountains are silver, its sands are of gold.

NOTE.—According to the official returns of the State of Guayana which I have before me, the exports of gold through the Custom-house of Ciudad Bolivar for the months of April and May, 1867, amounted to $158.815.00.

By Steamer Pioneer,	1194	ounces, or	$28.568.00
" " "	1800	" "	43.200.00
" Bark Rosedale	3627	" "	87.032.00
	6620	"	$158.800.00

This much without taking into consideration the vast amounts which are carried away by private individuals, without passing through the Custom-house to avoid the export duty levied on gold by the Venezuelian government.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE OIL-WELLS OF THE ORINOCO.

I FEAR that the description of the land of El Dorado has already been extended beyond the limits assigned to that chapter; otherwise we might continue our voyage down the noble river, and visit other points of attraction along its course; such as the falls of the Caroni, three miles above its confluence with the Orinoco. On its margins grows the beautiful *Bomplandia trifoliata*, which yields the Angostura-bark of the pharmacopœa—next to quinine, the most efficacious antidote against the miasmas of these regions. It also furnishes the principal ingredient in the composition of the fine bitters manufactured there under that name. By descending the river still farther, we might enter any of the thousand channels into which the Orinoco divides itself before it empties into the Atlantic Ocean, and there take a look at the curious race of men—the Waraun Indians—living on trees like apes, for want of dry land upon which to stretch their limbs; or in rude huts built on piles driven in the soft mud of the Great Delta. But as the time draws near

for our departure from the Llanos, and the rivers commence to overflow the plains, we will reascend the Orinoco and rejoin our friends, who await us impatiently on the banks of the Apure; or else we might find ourselves, like Spira and his companions, cut off from the rest of civilization. We shall also miss the curious harvest—*cosecha*—of turtles' eggs, which is gathered about this time upon the sand-islands of the Orinoco, just above the mouth of the Apure. Here the great turtles called *arraus* by the Indians, and *tortugas* by the whites, assemble in vast multitudes during the dry season to perfect the incubation of their eggs. This they accomplish by digging pits in the sand with their hind feet, in which they deposit the eggs, covering them afterwards very carefully, and entrusting the rest of the operation to the heat of the sun. The people from far and near this *el dorado* of eggs and turtles, then hasten to these sand-banks, and provision themselves for "a rainy day" at the expense of the lawful tenants of those islands.

Other travellers having already studied the habits of these amphibia in their native habitat, we may avail ourselves of their experience in forming some idea of their prodigious increase, in spite of their sluggish habits. I may mention, among others, Humboldt and Bates, who have given to the world very graphic accounts of this singular "harvest," the former on the Orinoco,* and the latter on the Amazon river.† But

* Travels to the Equinoctial Regions.

† The Naturalist on the Amazon.

the most interesting account within my knowledge is that of Father Gumilla, who, having spent many years among these wilds, is entitled to special attention on the part of the lovers of nature. As his book is very rare and curious nowadays, I will, for the benefit of my readers, give here a translation of the chapter devoted to the subject :

"OF THE EXTRAORDINARY HARVEST (*Cosecha*) OF TURTLES GATHERED BY THE INDIANS OF THE ORINOCO ; THEIR EGGS, AND OF THE PECULIAR OIL OBTAINED FROM THEM.

"So great is the number of turtles in the Orinoco river, that whatever I may say on this subject will fall far short of the actual truth ; and I even fear that many, in reading my authentic account of what I myself have repeatedly seen, experienced, and touched with my own hands, will accuse me of exaggeration ; but it is a fact that it would be as difficult to count the sands of the extensive banks of the Orinoco, as to compute the immense number of turtles which it harbors on its borders and in the depths of its currents.

"Some idea may be formed of the enormous consumption of these creatures, when we say that all the tribes and people of adjacent countries, and even from those farther off, frequent the Orinoco with their families to secure what I termed the harvest of turtles ; for they not only maintain themselves therewith during the months that it lasts, but also carry away a large supply of turtle-meat, dried by fire, and a still greater

number of baskets of eggs, dried also by the same means. But what principally attracts the people of these tribes is the oil which they gather from the eggs of said turtles, in large quantities, to anoint themselves throughout the year twice every day, and to sell to the more remote tribes who cannot, or through fear dare not, go down the river Orinoco.

"As soon as the river begins to fall and to display its first sandbanks in the month of February, the turtles commence to show themselves, in order to deposit their eggs in the sand; those which appear first are the small turtles called *terecayas*, weighing scarce an *arroba* of twenty-five pounds; these lay twenty-two and sometimes twenty-four eggs, like hen's eggs, but without the shell, instead of which they are covered by two membranes, one soft and the other thicker. With these *terecayas* other turtle also appear, who, in the previous year, found no sand in which to deposit their eggs, or were prevented from so doing by the great number assembled there. These large turtles, which, when three years old, weigh two *arrobas* —as I have proved by the scales—deposit sixty-two, and ordinarily, sixty-four round eggs each, larger than those of the *terecayas*, with stronger membrane, and with which the Indians play ball on shore, or egg each other in sport. In each nest of eggs there is one larger than the rest, from which the male is hatched; all the others are females. About this time the Indians, of various tribes, commence to arrive from all points of the adjacent countries: some of them build their straw huts; others content themselves by driving poles

in the sand, from which to swing their hammocks. A multitude of tigers also appear to turn up the turtles, which they devour in spite of their strong cuirass ; a circumstance which by no means adds to the pleasure and satisfaction that the Indians derive from their excursion to the Orinoco, since, in spite of all their care, scarcely a year passes in which the tigers do not devour some of the poor Indians, who have no other mode of keeping them off at night than by fires, which, so long as they burn, keep the beasts at a distance.

"Fearing the heat of the sun—which often kills them on the sand-banks—the turtles at first come out only at nightfall to lay their eggs ; but, as the season advances, the gathering is so great, that the multitudes already out prevent the passage of still greater numbers, which, with heads above water, are waiting a chance to pass on ; and so soon as an opportunity presents itself, they hasten to lay all their eggs at once —the burthen of which they cannot support without great inconvenience,—regardless of the sun and heat, which often costs many of them their lives.

"I have noticed three curious facts with reference to these turtle-nests : the first is, that after opening with the utmost care the holes in which these animals deposit their eggs, they take particular pains to close them again, so as not to leave a trace by which the nest may be found. For this purpose they leave the ground perfectly even with the rest of the sand-bank ; and in order that the marks of their feet may not lead to their discovery, they pass over and around the nest several times in succession before they quit the

ground. All their precautions are in vain, however, for wherever there are eggs, the sand remains quite loose, and gives way under foot; and by these means the eggs are found in the early part of the season; but later, in the height of the harvest, there is no need of looking for these signs; for, in the same sands in which the first turtles laid, the second, third, and scores of others also lay their eggs in such prodigious quantities, that wherever the Indians may dig, they find them in heaps, the animals themselves scattering them all over the ground while excavating their own nests.

"The second curious fact that I have observed, by driving a pole near to a newly-laid nest, is, that in three days' time, the incubation of the eggs is not only perfected, but the young turtles have broken through the shell; so great is the power of the sun and the intensity of the heat absorbed by the sand.

"The third point noted by me is, that the young turtles, on coming out of the shell—at which time they are about the size of a half dollar,—do not leave the nest by daylight, nature having taught them that the heat of the sun will kill them, and the birds of prey will devour them. They come forth, therefore, in the silence and cool of the night; and what has most excited my admiration is, that although the hole from which they emerge may be half a mile or more from the river, they never mistake the road, but go in a direct line to the water. This pleased me so much, that I have repeatedly taken the turtles a great distance from the river, carrying them covered, and turning them around over and over again on the ground, in

order to make them lose their course ; but whenever they found themselves free, they made straight for the water, and I following them, admiring the wonderful goodness of the Creator, who thus endows each of his creatures with powers to find its natural element. What a lesson to us, who, in spite of the hope of eternal reward and the danger of everlasting punishment, scarce succeed in taking the right path for that ultimate goal for which the goodness and mercy of God created us !

"About this time the Indians, both men and women, rise very early, and the former turn over as many turtles as they please, leaving them on their backs in such a way as to render them incapable of resuming their natural position ; for although they strive with their paddles to right themselves, their back is so high that they cannot touch the ground in order to obtain a foothold. They are then carried by their captors to the ranches, where they are made fast by leaving them on their backs, as aforesaid. Meanwhile the women and children occupy themselves in filling and carrying baskets of eggs and little turtles to the ranches, making large heaps of the former, and keeping the latter in the baskets to prevent their escape into the river, which they always do whenever they can. The men also dig holes in the sand down to the level of the river, which are quickly filled by the infiltration of the water, and place therein large numbers of baby-turtles, to be eaten as wanted ; each of which makes a delicious mouthful, free from bones, the very shells being soft and tasty. The number of

delicate young turtles eaten daily by the innumerable families congregated there is incalculable. But the quantity of eggs consumed is even greater, both as food and for the extraction of oil; so great, indeed, that notwithstanding the size of the Orinoco river, it is the opinion of the experts of that country that, were it not for this extraordinary consumption of turtles and their eggs, the increase of these animals in the river would be such as to render it unnavigable; for boats would find it impossible to make way through the immense number of turtles which would appear were all these eggs to be hatched; in which opinion I participate also. In the same way, it is sa d that on the fishing-banks of Newfoundland, frequented by so many vessels, the shoals of codfish are so immense that the passage of vessels is seriously embarrassed and delayed. It is also asserted that each fisherman can catch as many as four hundred codfish per day.

"Let us now see how the oil is extracted, which, as I have already said, is the chief attraction which brings so many people to the Orinoco. After washing the canoes which have brought them there, they draw them on the beach, and pour several pailsfull of water into them: they then wash the eggs in baskets, until not a grain of sand remains adhering to them, and when perfectly clean, they are emptied into the canoes and trod upon by children in the same way as grapes are mashed in wine-making. Once full, the canoes are left exposed to the sun's rays, and in due time a fine and limpid liquid rises to the surface, which is the oleaginous portion of the eggs; so abundant is

this, that I have been surprised to see a frying-pan placed dry on the fire, and after being heated, well beaten eggs poured therein, which, on touching the hot pan, gave forth sufficient oil to fry the omelet, with a certainty that it never sticks to the pan.

"Whilst the heat of the sun is extracting this fine oil, the Indian women place large pots over the fire, and the men with fine shells, very suitable for the purpose, remove the oil from the surface of the mixture in the canoes, and carry it to the pots, where the heat of the fire boils and purifies it. If, during the operation of transferring the oil any of the beaten eggs are taken along, they remain fixed in the bottom of the pots. The oil, when purified, is put in suitable jars, and is much finer and clearer than that of olives, as I have proven to many Europeans, who could hardly believe it, in the following manner. I filled half a glass with olive-oil; I then poured in a like quantity of oil from the eggs of turtles; when, lo! they commenced to change positions from top to bottom, first one and then the other, gradually mixing together in the middle until they finally commingled, losing their natural color and assuming an albuginous appearance like watered milk; the mixture being left quiet for half an hour or more, the egg-oil commenced to rise to the surface, and in a short time remained on top of the olive-oil, just as the latter floats on the surface of water, both resuming their natural color. But to return to our narrative.

"At the dinner hour—although they are all the while eating eggs and young turtles, just for the fun

of it—a single animal will provide three large and distinct dishes, ample for the largest family; a turtle, split on both sides, furnishing the following portions, viz.: head and neck, the two hind legs, and the pectoral paddles, which require a good-sized pot to hold them. Before placing them in it, some large lumps of fat are removed, yellow as the yolk of an egg; and this is another source of gain, which the Indians take home; and as the turtle which gives the least, yields two pounds of this fat, the profit is considerable. The pot being placed on the fire, the husband takes the shell which forms the turtle's back, and the wife the breast-plate; and after carefully chopping together the meat, fat, and great quantity of eggs which still adhere to the shell, the latter serve them as pots also, without the slightest danger of burning. Before the mess is quite cooked, they put the shells on the fireplaces, and make their first dish, the *gigote*, on the breast-plate, which is very delicious and tender; and even the breast-plate itself is sometimes eaten, as it becomes impregnated with the fat, and is quite palatable. The second dish is made from the hash prepared on the shell taken from the turtle's back. This is quite a treat, and is called *garapacho*, I do not know why. Finally, the third dish is the *olla*, or bouilli, which ends the meal, and is washed down with plenty of *chicha*,* which they take good care to provide themselves with in sufficient quantity for the whole season.

* A kind of beer made from Indian-corn.

"One would scarcely believe how fat the children, and in fact the whole pack of them, grow during the season; but no wonder, for as the good Father Manuel Roman, the Superior of our Orinoco missions, has often assured me, although born in Olmedo, and grown in Valladolid and Salamanca, he did not miss the fine mutton of those places so long as he could depend upon the turtles of the Orinoco. Other Spanish priests of the same missions expressed themselves in like terms.

"The gain and benefit derived from these turtles by the Indians does not stop here; for, besides the immense number of eggs which they consume, both as food and in the preparation of the oil, they also carry away great quantities of them, dried like figs in the sun; or by the heat of slumbering fires made underneath horizontal trellises raised for the purpose. The amount of eggs thus purloined can easily be imagined from the fact, that these people will readily give in exchange for a knife four basketfuls of them, each of which contains at least one thousand eggs. They also carry away as many turtles as they can conveniently stow in the canoes, without danger of sinking, tying them securely therein to prevent their escape.

"Of this species of turtle, what most excited my surprise was the immense number of eggs which each of them has within itself; for, besides the roe ready to be laid this year, farther in they have the one for the next season, of nearly the same size as the former, but destitute of that covering or white membrane which envelops the eggs; then follow those for the third year,

about the size of musket-balls ; for the fourth year, of the calibre for a fowling-piece ; for the fifth year, they are no bigger than buckshot ; and at this rate they decrease until they present a confused mass resembling turnip and mustard-seed ; and God only knows for how many years those creatures are endowed with similar receptacles of life in embryo."

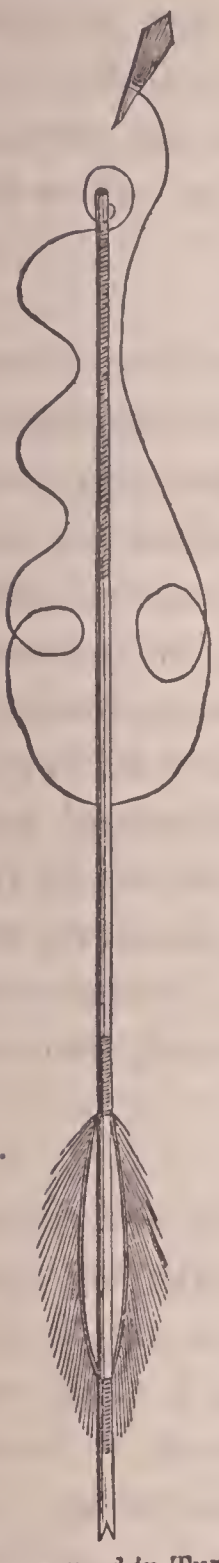
This much was observed and related concerning the turtles of Orinoco by the reverend missionary father in the early part of the seventeenth century : let us now hear what the great philosopher of modern times says in regard to these humble creatures ; for he, too, spent several days among the children of nature during the "harvest" of eggs and turtles provided for them by their beneficent mother.

"I acquired some general statistical notions on the spot, by consulting the missionary of Urvana, his lieutenant, and the traders of Angostura. The shore of Urvana furnishes one thousand botijas, or jars of oil annually. The price of each jar at Angostura varies from two piastres to two and a half. We may admit that the total produce of the three shores, where the *cosecha*, or gathering of eggs, is annually made, is five thousand botijas. Now, as two hundred eggs yield oil enough to fill a bottle (limeta), it requires five thousand eggs for a jar or botija of oil. Estimating at one hundred, or one hundred and sixteen, the number of eggs that one tortoise produces, and reckoning that one-third of these is broken at the time of lay-

ing, particularly by the 'mad tortoises,' we may presume that, to obtain annually five thousand jars of oil, three hundred and thirty thousand *arrau* tortoises, the weight of which amounts to one hundred and sixty-five thousand quintals, must lay thirty-three millions of eggs on the three shores where this harvest is gathered. The results of these calculations are much below the truth. Many tortoises lay only sixty or seventy eggs; and a great number of these animals are devoured by jaguars at the moment they emerge from the water. The Indians bring away a great number of eggs, to eat them dried in the sun; and they break a considerable number through carelessness during the gathering. The number of eggs that are hatched before the people can dig them up is so prodigious, that near the encampment of Urvana I saw the whole shore of the Orinoco swarming with little tortoises an inch in diameter, escaping with difficulty from the pursuit of the Indian children. If to these considerations be added, that all the *arraus* do not assemble on the three shores of the encampment; and that there are many which lay their eggs in solitude, and some weeks later, between the mouth of the Orinoco and the confluence of the Apure; we must admit that the number of turtles which annually deposit their eggs on the banks of the Lower Orinoco, is near a million. This number is very great for so large an animal. In general large animals multiply less considerably than the smaller ones." *

* Humboldt, Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America.

So extraordinary do these things appear to those not conversant with the wonders of South America, that, to strengthen my statements, I am often compelled to quote from more familiar writers on this subject, for fear of being accused of exaggeration, as has already happened with reference to one simple fact of every-day occurrence among Indian hunters. I allude to the mode of shooting turtles and crocodiles with arrows of a peculiar construction, referred to at page 109, and which appeared for the first time in previous editions of my *Wild Scenes in South America.* The *London Saturday Review* of July 11th, 1863, commenting upon this—to others than the practised eye of an Indian—most extraordinary feat of skill, appeals to one of the best mathematicians in the kingdom to learn if such a thing can be done at all ; although in other respects the remarks of the reviewer are highly flattering to the book. I will endeavor to show, on this occasion, that nothing is easier when you know how to do it, in support of which I could do no better than appeal also to the testimony of English authorities. Both Wallace and Bates mention the fact in their re-



Arrow used in Turtle Shooting.

spective books of travel on the Amazon and Rio Negro; and the latter accompanies his remarks with an accurate representation of the arrow used for that purpose, which I reproduce on the previous page, with the following paragraph alluding to the mode of using it:

"Cardozo and I spent an hour paddling about. I was astonished at the skill which the Indians display in shooting turtles. They did not wait for their coming to the surface to breathe, but watched for the slight movements in the water, which revealed their presence underneath. These little tracks on the water are called the Siriri; the instant one was perceived, an arrow flew from the bow of the nearest man, and never failed to pierce the shell of the submerged animal. When the turtle was very distant, of course the aim had to be taken at a considerable elevation, but the marksmen preferred a longish range, because the arrow then fell *perpendicularly* on the shell, and entered it more deeply." *

The writer goes on then to describe the arrow, which corresponds in every particular with my own description of it at page 109. *En passant*, I will remark here that both books containing it came out in London about the same time; and I would recommend to lovers of travel and adventure the perusal of Mr. Bates' interesting chapter on the

* The Naturalist on the Amazons, vol. ii., p. 260. London, 1863.

harvest of turtles' eggs among the sand-islands of the mighty Amazon, as well as Humboldt's narrative on the same subject among those of its brother river, the Orinoco ; both are exceedingly entertaining.

But what will the mathematicians and military men of Great Britain, or any other country, say, when I tell them of an Indian who, for a small consideration, would strike a *medio-real*—half a dime—with an arrow at an angle of 85° ? This was done by placing the money on the top of a lime or lemon close to the big toe of the archer's left foot ; he then would bend backwarks, assisted by the right one, allowing a sufficient space between the bow and the lime for the arrow to turn down after being shot up in the air ; and so certain was the aim that the savage made quite a little fortune about the streets of Caracas, where he exhibited his skill during the short visit which his Cacique paid President Paez at the Capital.

It is also related of another Indian that he could shoot a buzzard soaring above his head without looking at the bird, guided only by the shadow cast upon the ground about midday. In connection with this the reader will find in the work of the Rev. J. C. Fletcher, *Brazil and the Brazilians*, a wood-cut representing an Indian archer shooting on his back at a flock of ducks passing over him. A large and strong bow is bent by his legs while he holds the butt-end of the arrow in his hands—"In this way they are able to shoot game at a great distance."

Although these things appear very wonderful to

us, who cannot even "draw a bow at a venture," we should recollect that the very existence of the savage depends upon the accuracy of his aim as, with lightning speed, he flings the unerring arrow at his prey. No one thinks of doubting the historical story about the Parthian children who were obliged to bring down their morning's meal from the top of a post with a much more clumsy instrument—the *sling*, thereby acquiring the wonderful dexterity for which their warriors were famed.

Some may be inclined to doubt the truth of the stories found in profane history, but will not dispute the testimony of Scripture, wherein we are told that the giant-warrior Goliah was slain by the youth David, with only the help of a sling and a "pebble from the brook." It may be said that it was by Divine aid that David hit the mark so skillfully; but who shall presume to say that such aid is withheld, because the being requiring it is a savage and not one of the chosen race?

And now, my dear reader, though such wonderful exhibitions of skill as are related above may appear to your mind as savoring strongly of the proverbial exaggeration which is supposed to accompany the relation of all extraordinary feats of the chase, yet, if we reflect on the thousand examples which come under our daily observation, illustrating the marvelous inventive powers of man, and the manual skill required to produce and apply many of his inventions, you cannot but conclude with me that there are latent

powers given to us by the great Master, which, when awakened by necessity, can surmount obstacles and attain ends involving a degree of physical as well as mental perfection almost superhuman. A constant supply of food is the first and greatest demand of nature. To attain this, the inhabitants of the vast wilds of South America have no other resource than the game which their streams and forests afford; the acmé of their savage education is to excel in the skill and cunning of the chase; their hunting implements are necessarily rude and imperfect; consequently, great accuracy of aim, and steadiness of nerve are required in their successful application.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

HAVING now accomplished the most difficult part of our labors, namely, that of transporting three thousand wild animals across a rising stream by such primitive means, we took advantage of the few canoes at our disposal to transfer ourselves and chattels to the other side of the river. This was not so easily done, as the *creciente* was rapidly gaining upon us, with no small risk to our ponderous equipment, which had to be landed on the sandy beach; and unless quickly removed, while waiting for another canoe-load, our traps were in constant danger of being carried off by the boisterous waves of the river. I had thus the misfortune of being deprived of my hammock, which circumstance compelled me to seek repose at night on the stiff hide covers of the baggage—not a very comfortable couch after a hard ride in the hot sun.

Our long train of baggage-mules and wild beasts necessitated many stoppages by the way in order to incorporate stragglers, but more frequently to hunt anew the runaways among the latter—not an easy task.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

The bulls especially showed a marked reluctance to leave behind their bellowing harems in the everglades across the river. Such was their love of home in this respect, that we were assured that most of those which succeeded in evading our pursuit, made their way back to their savannas in spite of the broad expanse of water which separated them. Much valuable time and patience were lost in this way, while the increasing inundation was following fast on our steps, so much so, that long after we had left the banks of the river on our rear, we had to wade through a continuous sheet of water, which was every moment rising above the fetlocks of our beasts. We also had to ford several smaller streams, already swollen by the rapid rise of the Apure; but, as no canoes could be had amidst those wilds, for love or money, we availed ourselves of the primitive contrivance devised on such occasions by means of a raw hide fashioned into a lighter. The trunks and boxes were carefully piled inside the skin, and if a person chose to avail himself of this frail barge, he had only to sit steadily on the top of the baggage; the load was then carefully launched on the water, the other end of the rope intrusted to the swimmer and towed in safety to the other side. In this manner our ponderous Doctor and a few others who were unwilling to expose their own skin to the tender mercies of the caribes, were successfully ferried across, although it required a steady nerve not to stir an inch and thus upset the whole concern.

Our march across the prairies presented a splendid sight and was suggestive of a long file of prisoners

after a well-contested field of battle. At the head of the column, which extended for upward of a mile, marched a strong picket of horsemen, the *Punteros*, guiding the caravan; and on the sides and rear was another file of men with lazos ready to unfold after deserters. Lively tunes and whistling were kept up by the men for the diversion of the cattle, which appeared quite delighted with the music and in consequence became less restive on the march.

When near San Jaime, I, together with a party of young companions, having separated ourselves from the rest and taken another route, lost ourselves in the intricate passes leading to the village. This circumstance, although it delayed us for some time from reaching the camp, led us to an abundant field of rich honey, the production of a small wasp called *matajey*, which builds its nest on the branches of the trees, in the shape of a large ball. The sting of this insect is so distressing, that persons affected by it become feverish and benumbed; therefore, in order to possess ourselves of its delicious honey-combs, we took the precaution to smoke out the wasps by means of a burning rag at the end of a long pole applied to the mouth of the nest, when the whole swarm abandoned it to the hunters without molestation.

It was almost dark when we arrived at San Jaime, having hit accidentally upon the right path, after wandering the whole day through the woods; but, being well supplied with honey and water, we did not regret as much the loss of our dinner, as the fact of its having been prepared by another kind of swarm, but this time of pretty girls, who had assembled for

the purpose at the cottage of our hospitable host. We enjoyed, however, the pleasure of their unsophisticated society for some time before retiring to our hammocks where, fatigued by the toils of our previous adventure, we speedily lost ourselves again in "sweet, balmy sleep."

Being rather in a hurry to reach the pass before a sudden rise of the creeks connected with the river Portuguesa, we were up long before sunrise, and had barely time to partake of a substantial breakfast, prepared by our charming entertainers.

Immediately upon our arrival at the pass, we proceeded to force our cattle across the river, which being less wide than the Apure, and our herds having become more manageable after the long march, we were enabled to execute it in better order and less time than at the former river. Still we contrived somehow or other to tarry here longer than was necessary, having wasted three days in accomplishing what might have been the work of one. The fact is, that we were rather taken up with our former feminine acquaintances, especially at the close of day, when the party assembled in the barracoon, destined for the *fandango*, which was usually kept up the whole night.

Fitful accompaniment to these nocturnal revelries was the deafening croaking of the toads and frogs, now abounding by myriads in the marshes and quagmires of the vicinity. The shrill, metallic notes of the frogs, and the hoarse croaking of their milky brethren, are a feature which never fails to excite the astonishment of strangers in those regions. The former especially are so striking, that were an English-

man or American suddenly transported there, without knowledge of these sounds, he would imagine himself at home, in the neighborhood of ten thousand steam whistles. I was assured by our friend B., with reference to the toads of Guadarrama, a village on the banks of the Portuguese, that one night he was thrown down in the street by coming in contact with one of these creatures, which he mistook for a boy in a stooping posture. Indignant at, what he supposed, the indiscretion of the fellow, B. was in the act of kicking him away when, to his surprise, he perceived the seeming boy slowly moving off in the shape of a big toad!

This, of course, is another of B.'s great yarns, which he endeavored to pass on us as veritable facts occurring to him during his wandering peregrinations; but really, putting aside his extravagant stories, such is the volume of voice and long-sustained sopranos, bassos, and contraltos of the toads and frogs of South America, that one would suppose they had lungs as big as those of a manatí. And as regards the size that these creatures attain here, I may quote a passage from a recent book of travels in those countries which, had it not appeared in London simultaneously with the first edition of the *Wild Scenes in South America*,* any one might be inclined to think —after reading the preceding remarks—that they had been suggested by the perusal of the following paragraphs:

* See London Athenæum of August 3, 1863, which contains a full review of both books.

"In soft, dripping weather, the country roads become almost impassable, and my favorite resource was to sit still and read Tennyson or Longfellow; but the studies of a novice in Brazil, on a wet evening, are strangely interrupted by the extraordinary proceedings of frogs and toads of all sorts and sizes, which testify their exuberant joy by the most discordant noises. Croaking is no name for it. Some of the milder and quieter kinds may perhaps be said to croak, but these are soon silenced by another tribe, whose name is Legion, grunting, snorting, and shrieking like a railway train at full speed; and when they stop for want of breath, the 'wondrous song' is taken up by larger numbers of other detestable batrachyans, which keep up a frantic revel of rattling and clattering, such as I have never heard equalled, except by an intoxicated chorus of May sweeps.

"Some of the toads are enormous. In one of my mountain rambles I suddenly spied a very beautiful lycopodium growing in large quantities on a moist bank, and, without looking at my feet, sprang across the path to gather a specimen. I stumbled over something very hard and immovable, and nearly measured my length in the mud; but I seized the lycopodium, and then turned round to look at the obstacle. It was a monstrous toad, nearly a foot long, with great yellow pits around its spiteful eyes, and as ugly a brute as ever I saw. He did not make the least attempt to move, and seemed to be chuckling over the fact of nearly upsetting a traveller. A friend of mine, however, told me that he had been offered a still larger

specimen as a present, which he declined to accept on the ground of ferocity. He said it was as big as a hat, it opened its mouth like an oyster, barked like a dog, and flew at his legs! A nice pet to keep in a strawberry-bed!" *

But I never was so struck with the power which frogs alone can exert "in congress assembled," as one night that I accompanied—soon after our return from the Llanos—a military expedition to surprise a band of revolutionists, who had been committing all sorts of depredations on the plantations across the lake, and were preparing to attack the town of Villa de Cura on the road to the plains. We started from Maracay in the early part of a rainy night, and had to take a circuitous route—it hardly deserved the name of road—around the eastern end of the lake to reach the village of Magdaleno (headquarters of the marauders) before daylight. As the expedition had to be conducted with much precaution, neither drums nor bugles were allowed; consequently all orders had to be given *viva-voce*. But when we reached the nearest point to the swampy borders of the lake, I do not believe that even Stentor could have made himself heard in the midst of that hellish uproar. To add to our "confusion worse confounded," the soil was so spongy and drenched with the vernal deluge, that infantry and cavalry—we had no artillery—were nearly swallowed up by the mud before firing a shot at the

* South American Sketches, by Thos. Woodbine Hinchliff, F. R. G. S.

enemy ; fortunately we extricated ourselves before the latter were apprized of our approach by a volley fired at our vanguard by one of their advanced posts near the village, which, had they exhibited the least judgment in military tactics, they might have stationed a little further off, where we encountered a turbulent stream which only a portion of our force with the utmost difficulty could cross. As it turned out, we entered the village pell-mell with their advanced guard, and soon scattered them over the neighboring mountains, where further pursuit was utterly impossible.

What a glorious chance these swampy realms of Venezuela would offer some French gourmand desirous of migrating to South America ! And yet, strange to say, our people will not touch that epicurean *bonne-bouche*, which has conferred a name upon a whole civilized nation : *les sauvages !*

Another noisy creature that makes its appearance about this time also, is the *chicharra*, an insect of the locust tribe, with which the woods are literally filled, and whose sharp, shrill, and continuous chant almost surpasses that of the frogs themselves. Fortunately, they are only heard in the day-time ; and our route being mostly over open prairies, we were not so constantly tormented by them, except whenever we had to pass through the woods infested by these noisy insects. It seemed to me that for every leaf of those truly gigantic trees there were twenty *chicharras*, all singing at the top of their voices, without the least intermission. What they live upon—for I did not

perceive any damage to the foliage of the trees—and when do they get their meals, my observations could not discover. Sullivan tells us of two other insects of the tropics, which joined to the above, might rival the nocturnal concerts of *maître crapeau.*

"During our ride, I was startled by hearing what I fully imagined was the whistle of a steam-engine; but I was informed it was a noise caused by a beetle that is peculiar to Tobago. It is near the size of a man's hand; and fixing itself against a branch commences a kind of drumming noise, which by degrees quickens to a whistle. It was so loud that, when standing fully twenty yards from the tree where it was in operation, the sound was so shrill that you had to raise your voice considerably to address your neighbor. The entomological productions of the tropics struck me as being quite as astonishing in size and nature as the botanical or zoological wonders. There is another beetle, called the razor-grinder, that imitates the sound of a knife-grinding machine so exactly, that it is impossible to divest oneself of the belief that one is in reality listening to 'some needy knife-grinder' who has wandered out to the tropical wilds on spec." *

Some kinds of trees were also alive with another, though quite harmless tenant, the *iguana,* a green lizard measuring nearly four feet in length, and thick in proportion round the body, whose flesh is said to surpass that of the tenderest chicken, and, I imagine —never having tasted it—even that of the celebrated

* Rambles in North and South America.

French *bonne-bouche* referred to above. The eggs which it lays in great profusion, I know from personal experience, are quite sweet, and can be taken out of the animal, without injury to the harmless creature, by cutting it open and sewing it up again. While at San Jaime I heard a story in connection with this reptile, which is very characteristic of the Spanish commanders during the war of Independence, and whose memory is still fresh throughout the country they overran with their exactions. It appears that one of these gentlemen newly arrived from Spain, had established his headquarters at San Jaime, which was by this time pretty well cleaned out of everything that moved upon the earth. One day, the *soi-disant* commander was going his rounds about the town, when he met an Indian boy carrying a brace of *iguanas* suspended from a stick upon his shoulders; these lizards, by virtue of their aerial prerogative, or perhaps on account of their inexhaustible numbers, having escaped the general onslaught upon other living creatures, not excepting the inhabitants. The Spaniard, who had never seen iguanas in his country, naturally had his curiosity aroused, and at once instituted as close an interrogatory respecting these, as if a doomed "insurgent" had been brought to him. "Say, boy, are they good to eat?"—"*Si, Señor,*" replied the boy, who probably had never tasted in his life any other kind of food.—"What will you take for them?" (quite considerate).—"*Una peseta, Señor*" (a quarter of a dollar). A bargain was at once made to the satisfaction of both parties, and the iguanas were handed over to

the orderly beside the commander, who gave the proper directions to have them served for dinner; and so delighted was His Excellency with the dish, that he published at once a *bando* offering a reward of twenty-five cents for every brace of iguanas brought to him. Three days afterwards he had to countermand the order through another *bando*, threatening with capital punishment any one who would *dare* to bring him another brace of the horrid-looking creatures, with which the juvenile portion of the town had by this time filled his headquarters.

The favorite haunts of the iguana are the Ceiba, and the Sand-box trees—*Ura crepitans*—both bristling with sharp thorns, a good protection against the persecution of predatory boys; otherwise these lizards fall an easy prey, when perched upon more accessible localities, by merely "whistling for them;" for being, as it appears, very fond of musical sounds, they are readily lulled to sleep by that means, while the captors prepare a noose at the end of a long rod with which they secure their victim. They do not always fare badly, however, for being easily domesticated, they are kept as pets by the female portion of the household, where they become very useful in ridding the cottage of cockroaches and other vermin. Their bitterest enemies, however, are roving, lazy Indians, who not only consider them a dainty morsel, but take particular delight in tormenting these inoffensive creatures by quartering them alive, and teazing them in various ways; thus, when any person is in a bad plight his troubles are compared to those of the iguana

in that predicament, as will be seen in the following popular ditty:

Los trabajos de la iguana
Cuando los Indios la cojen,
Le quitan los cuatro patas
Y le dicen, iguana, corre!

When Indians seize the iguana
Her sorrows are begun,
They cut off her four feet,
And cry, "Iguana, run!"

How different the case would have been if, instead of the puny, harmless creatures that iguanas are at the present day, their cruel tormentors had lived in the times of their prototype, the *Iguanodon*, the most colossal of the saurian reptiles, sixty feet in length, with a horn on its snout as formidable as that of the rhinoceros, and teeth sharp enough to munch to a jelly the most stately Ceiba or Sand-box tree. "It is difficult to resist the feeling of astonishment, not to say incredulity"—observes Figuier—"which creeps over one while contemplating the disproportion so striking between this being of the ancient world and its congener of the new." * The Iguanodon was in fact an iguana of huge dimensions, enjoying the freedom of the jungle with the *Hylæosaurus* and the *Megalosaurus*—two other saurian monsters of the cretaceous period. The latter is represented as possessing teeth in perfect accord with the destructive functions developed in this formidable creature, for they partake at once of the knife, the sabre, and the saw.

* *La Terre avant le Déluge.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

CALABOZO.

While quietly absorbed one day in the pleasures of the angler by the banks of a creek not far from the camp, I was startled in my peaceful occupation by the report of fire-arms in that direction. There were rumors concerning the depredations of a band of robbers in that neighborhood, and therefore I had every reason to suppose they had been bold enough to attack our little band of resolute men with a view to plundering the camp. To pack up lines and portfolio was the work of an instant, and hurrying toward the camp, I arrived breathless and panting with fatigue in time to get the last glimpses of the cause of this uproar in the shape of a *lancha* gliding quickly down the river. It seems that the boatmen, delighted with the presence of the beloved Chieftain of the Llanos, immediately recurred to the usual way of expressing their enthusiasm, whether in peace or war, through the means of the all-potent gunpowder. In the afternoon of the same day a detachment of horse, composed for the most part of citizens from Calabozo,

arrived at the pass to invite the general to their city, and to offer him protection, in case of need, from the band of desperadoes above mentioned; these had already been bold enough to attack the prison guard of Calabozo, with the object of carrying off one of its inmates, a prominent citizen of the place who had been implicated in the robbery of a large drove of mules. Although it was currently reported that his two sons were the perpetrators of this unworthy act, yet, the fact that the animals were found on his estate, and his stout refusal to implicate his sons, made him responsible for the robbery; he was therefore incarcerated and his trial had commenced when his sons, adding sedition to theft, attacked the prison during the night with a band of peons from their own and other cattle estates. The result was most disastrous to the assailants; one of the sons having been badly wounded in the strife was taken prisoner and shot in the public square; while the other forfeited his life soon after during the vigorous persecution undertaken by the citizens against his band. Yet, this handful of men, badly armed and without leaders, but with a wide field of forest and savannas for retreat, and plenty of cattle for subsistence, continued for a long time to engage the serious attention of the government; and finally, when the following revolution broke out, they formed the nucleus around which the rebel party mustered very strong. In this manner many depredators not only evade the punishment of justice for their crimes, but eventually rise in importance, and even become leading spirits in the land where the laws are powerless in repressing their excesses.

With this encouraging prospect before us, we bade adieu to the gay brunettes of La Portuguesa and took the straightest route to Calabozo, across the great *estero* or swamp of Camaguan. An entire day was spent in wading through this refreshing transit route, which, owing to the increasing rise of the river, had already acquired the aspect of a broad lake. Our horses were most of the time immersed in the water up to the saddle girths, and few of them escaped total submersion, wherever there were any depressions of the ground. Many of the baggage mules especially, having no rider to guide them, lost their footing and rolled in the water, to the great discomfort of those who had any articles of apparel in their loads. Toward the afternoon we emerged from this dismal swamp and made a landing at a place called Banco Largo, celebrated in the annals of the horse epidemic as the cattle estate upon which the wrath of Heaven fell after the blasphemous boasting of its owner.

We were beginning to appreciate the comfort of riding again upon firm ground, when we observed a group of horsemen emerging from the palmar on our right, galloping in the direction of our scouts, as if threatening to cut them off. Fearing lest they might be the band of robbers whom we had every reason to suspect of evil intentions, we put spurs to our horses in hot chase of them. Mistaking us in turn for those gentry, the strangers pushed on ahead of us to evade our pursuit. Our scouts observing their retreat cut off by a larger force, were not slow in their endeavors to reach the farm-house, where they could defend themselves against the supposed robbers until we

could come up to their assistance. The suspected party being mounted on fresh horses, we found it difficult, however, to overtake them. Fortunately one of their horses stumbled accidentally in a hole, throwing down the rider, which circumstance placed him in our hands; from him we ascertained that they were not *salteadores*, but *vaqueros* from a neighboring cattle farm, whom the annoyances of the *mosquilla* had compelled to ride through the palmar at robber's speed. His companions observing that we permitted him to depart in peace, now slackened their pace, and had their fears dispelled before they could carry the alarm to other places that the *salteadores* were close at hand.

At Venegas, a cattle State not far from Calabozo, we parted company with our herds, abandoning their care and guidance to the efficient caporals, while we proceeded direct to the Palmyra of the Llanos, always escorted by the citizen-guard who had come so far to meet us. Another deputation from the city, composed of the most prominent persons in the place, met us at the pass of the Guárico, and after a few congratulatory compliments, we rode on without stopping until we reached the village of the Mision de Abajo. Here we remained long enough to change our wet garments and partake of a collation prepared at the summer residence of an old soldier of Independence. This village is famous on account of several crystalline springs issuing from deep gullies made by the water on a hard conglomerate composed of sand, pebbles, and nodules of beautiful agates; the whole cemented together by a calcareous substance, consisting probably

of minute shells of infusoria.* Some of the pools measure several fathoms in depth; yet the water is so transparent, that the smallest pebble can be clearly discerned at the bottom; I also noticed many small fish. These sparkling natural fountains were shaded by groves of balsamiferous plants, such as copaiferas, amyris, and carob-trees, the dark foliage of which was relieved by a carpet of green grass extending for miles around, the whole presenting an appearance of a well-cultivated and beautifully laid out English park. Thither resort, during the sultry months of summer, the inhabitants of Calabozo, who now came out in vast numbers to welcome us to their beautiful city.

The procession was formed on the extensive natural lawn, three miles in length, between the village and the city, which rose in the distance amidst the towering foliage of the fan-palms surrounding it in oriental magnificence. As we entered the narrow, but cleanly streets, the firing of muskets, pistols, and blunderbusses commenced amidst the *vivas* of the population, while a shower of roses fell on the favored head of the "Lion of the Llanos," † as he passed under the windows of the houses.

The city of Calabozo, capital of the province of El Guárico, is situated upon the northern extremity of the *mesa* or plateau of the same name, command-

* See Darwin, Geology of the Pampas, pp. 129–171. Murray, 1852.

† Leon de los Llanos, or Leon de Payara—the appellation given to General Paez by the people after the action of San Juan de Payara in 1837, when he defeated with his body-guard of sixty Llaneros the forces of the rebel chieftain Farfan, numbering one thousand.

ing an extensive view of the picturesque country watered by the beautiful river which gives its name to the province. Unlike all the other towns of the Llanos, Calabozo is an extremely well-built city, with streets running at right angles. The houses are neat and commodious, ranking with the best in the capital of the republic. It contains a number of fine churches, one of which was built at the expense of a wealthy cattle proprietor of the place; it is one of the finest temples in the country.

Words cannot do justice to the enthusiastic reception and boundless hospitality extended to us on this occasion by the generous inhabitants. In addition to the regular entertainments, such as breakfast and dinner-parties, balls, and *fandangos* provided daily in their city residences, we were occasionally treated to a *fête champêtre, á la llanera*, in their *quintas* or country-houses. Most of these are situated on the banks of the beautiful Guárico, on the slopes of the plateau upon which the city is built; and there, amidst the most luxuriant groves of orange, lemon, and other tropical fruits, the abundant fare was served to us in true Llanero style. In the mean time the *trovatori* of the Llanos did not fail to enliven the scene with their never-ending *trovas llaneras*, in which especial mention was made of the most prominent persons to whom we were indebted for this munificent hospitality; but more particularly to the past deeds of the personage who prompted it. The broad fan-shaped leaves of the *moriche*-palm (Mauritia flexuosa)—the celebrated Tree of Life of the Warraoun Indians—supplied the most appropriate table-cloths on these

occasions, spread in the vicinity of some murmuring spring, issuing in most cases from the foot of the palm-trees. The natives believe that this plant possesses the power of pumping water from the ground by means of its matted roots: they evidently confound cause and effect in this, as well as in many other cases; for this luxuriant palm will not thrive except in moist ground. The slopes of the *mesa* acting as a vast drain to the plain above, offer this desideratum to the *moriche*-palm. Some of the springs are of a thermal character, but not too warm to prevent persons enjoying a most refreshing bath. I noticed, in one instance, two springs running side by side, one of which was cold and the other warm. The tide-flooded lands on the Lower Orinoco and Amazon rivers seem to be particularly adapted to the development of this noble* species of palm. "In those places," says Wallace,† "there is no underwood to break the view among interminable ranges of huge columnar trunks, rising unbroken by branch or leaf to the height of eighty or a hundred feet, a vast natural temple, which does not yield in grandeur and sublimity to those of Palmyra or Athens."

A full-grown leaf of this tree is quite a load for one man to carry. The petiole, or leaf-stock, is a solid beam ten or twelve feet long, while the leaf or fan itself measures nine or ten across. The fruit, in bunches of three hundred and upward, perfectly resembles the cones of the white pine. When arrived at

* Linneus, in his enthusiasm for the splendid family of palms, calls them the princes of the vegetable kingdom.

† Palms of the Amazon and Rio Negro.

its maturity, it is yellow within and scarlet without, covered with scales.

The benefits of this life-supporting tree may be reckoned as numerous as the number of days in the year. From the unopened leaves the wild man of the forest obtains a fibre remarkable for its toughness, and which he twists into cordage for his bow-string and fishing tackle, or weaves it into elegant hammocks and aprons for himself and family; he also plats them neatly into mats and cloaks, and even sails for his canoe; when fully expanded, these leaves form the best thatch for his hut. From the terminal bud or inner layer of leaves, commonly styled the cabbage of the palm, the Indian procures a vegetable quite analogous to, and more tender and delicious than a similar production of the garden. The fruit in like manner affords a variety of alimentary substances, according to the season in which it is gathered, whether its saccharine pulp is fully mature, or whether it is in a green state. Like the plantain and the celebrated peach-palm of the Rio Negro, it is either eaten raw, when fully ripe, or roasted—in the latter case tasting very much like chestnuts. Soaked in water and allowed to ferment, it forms a pleasant drink somewhat resembling *pulque*. The ripe fruit also yields by boiling in water, an oil which is readily converted into soap by means of the ashes of a Clusia, (*quiripití*.) "The spathe, too—a fibrous bag which envelops the fruit before maturity—is much valued by the Indian, furnishing him with an excellent and durable cloth. Taken off entire, it forms bags in which he keeps the red paint for his toilet, or the silk cotton for his ar-

rows, or he even stretches out the larger ones to make himself a cap, cunningly woven by nature without a seam or joining. When cut open longitudinally and pressed flat, it is used to preserve his delicate feather ornaments and gala dresses, which are kept in a chest of plaited palm-leaves between layers of smooth *bussú* cloth."* The trunk of the male tree contains a farinaceous meal, *yuruma*, resembling sago, and like the fecula of the tapioca-root, it is readily converted into bread by simply drying it on hot earthen plates. Allowed to rot in the stem, this meal gives birth to numerous fat worms, highly esteemed by Indian gourmands. Tapped near the base of the leaves, the trunk yields also an abundance of a sweet liquor, which, when fermented, forms one of the various kinds of palm-wines. Such are in substance some of the most useful products of this veritable tree of life, with which the existence of a rude people is as intimately connected, as that of civilized man is with the luxuries and comforts that surround his home. "When the Tamanacks," says Humboldt, "are asked how the human race survived the great deluge, the 'age of water' of the Mexicans, they say: 'a man and a woman saved themselves on a high mountain, called Tamanacu, situated on the banks of the Asiberu, and casting the fruit of the moriche-palm, they saw the seeds contained in these fruits produce men and women who repeopled the earth.' Thus we find in all its simplicity, among nations now in a savage state, a tradition which the Greeks embellished with all the charms of imagination."

* Wallace, Palms of the Amazon and Rio Negro.

To protect themselves from the attacks of mosquitoes and wild beasts, the tribes roaming over the great delta of the Orinoco, are in the habit of raising between the huge trunks of the palm-trees hanging platforms skilfully interwoven with the foliage, which allow them to live in the trees like monkeys. The floor of these aërial habitations is covered with a coating of mud, on which the fires for household purposes are made. Thus when the first explorers of the Orinoco River penetrated for the first time into that exuberant *terra incognita*, they were surprised to observe, among the tops of the palm-trees, flames issuing at night as if suspended in the air. "The Guaranis still owe the preservation of their physical, and perhaps their moral independence, to the half-submerged, marshy soil over which they roam with a light and rapid step, and to their elevated dwellings in the trees, a habitation never likely to be chosen from motives of religious enthusiasm by an American Stylites." *

I also met for the first time at Calabozo with the most splendid rose-bush, or rather tree, I had ever seen, and which appears to be indigenous to that hot region, as I am told that the same grows in great luxuriance at San Fernando and Ciudad Bolívar, but was unknown to the rest of the country previous to our visit to the Llanos. Being passionately fond of flowers myself, I did not neglect to bring along with me this beautiful new variety to our home in the Valleys of Aragua, where it soon displayed its count-

* The followers of a sect founded in Syria by the fanatical pillar-saint, Simeon Sinanites.—HUMBOLDT.

less blossoms to the admiring gaze of the passers by. From thence it was also carried by me to Caracas, where it soon became the general favorite of the fair dames of the Capital, who by unanimous accord named it, not as might be supposed after the introducer, but after his father, with which the former was equally well satisfied; and certainly no more beautiful compliment could have been paid their favorite champion, than by associating his name with the acknowledged Queen of Beauty among flowers. The size attained by this plant surpasses any thing of the kind with which I am acquainted. When favored by a dry and hot climate like that of Calabozo, its shoots attain a height of fifteen to twenty feet with a corresponding thickness; so that a hammock with its usual load can be supported between two trees; and as these put out a great number of branches, each of them loaded with flowers or buds ready to expand, they present a sight truly splendid. A hundred blossoms may be plucked each morning of the year without marring its luxuriant beauty. I have myself counted over one thousand buds on a single plant. These flowers are of a delicate pink color, with very regular petals of a deciduous nature; so that in detaching themselves from the calix, they cover the ground upon which the parent grows, with a rosy carpet.

"Sin flores y sin hermosas
Qué fuera de los mortales?
Bien habeis nacido, rosas,
Sobre el lodo de los males."

—Arolas.

TRANSLATION.

"Without beauty, without flowers,
What would be this world of ours?
Well, that e'en in misery dire
Find we roses 'mid the mire."

The truth of the above sentiment we soon realized; from this time a succession of misfortunes, commencing with a violent attack of fever which nearly carried us all to the grave, and ending with the destruction of our property and peaceful homes, followed one another without intermission.

The fever was doubtless induced by our previous exposure on the journey and subsequent dissipations at Calabozo, although the city itself is one of the healthiest spots in the republic. Unfortunately, our physician, who was blessed with a very jealous wife, had been summoned home by his better half on hearing of our approach to the fairy metropolis of the Llanos. However, there were two or three medical gentlemen in the place, and these, with the unremitting kindness and assistance of the ladies, managed to keep us alive until a skilful physician, who had been sent for, arrived from the Valleys of Aragua. The critical condition of our respected Leader and sire particularly gave them serious fears, as the fever in his case had commenced to assume a malignant character. Courier after courier was despatched across the miry plains to hasten the arrival of the doctor, while the generous inhabitants vied with each other in the anxious cares with which they surrounded the sick-bed of their beloved guest. Years have rolled on, and many changes have since taken place, both

in the affairs of the nation and in the fortunes of the subject of these remarks; yet, their love for the "Martyr of San Antonio," * far from diminishing, seems to have increased during his protracted exile; for, as late as 1861, after the overthrow of Monagas, a petition addressed to Pres. Tovar asking his recall, and signed by all the inhabitants of Calabozo, has come to hand, protesting in the strongest terms against the impolicy and injustice of leaving him still in exile when the nation most needs his counsel and influence. Justly deprecating the horrors of civil war and the want of unity which have existed in the republic since the downfall of the Monagas party, the petitioners conclude with this feeling outburst of patriotic solicitude for the absence of their favorite champion: "From the far-off shores of the Arauca, to the sources of our own Guárico, our anxious horsemen watch incessantly the far horizon, inquire from the passing breezes of the destinies of the Hero, who has condemned himself to voluntary exile, and then exclaim with a sigh: 'Were he again to lead us on to battle, Victory would be forthcoming, strengthened by Peace, and blessed by the vanquished.'"

* *San Antonio*, an old castle in Cumaná, where General Paez was kept in durance for nine months by the late ruler of Venezuela, General José T. Monagas.

CONCLUSION.

Here, courteous reader, end our rough journeys across the Llanos, and our real troubles commence; for having been involved—contrary to my own inclination, it must be owned—in the political strifes so prevalent in Spanish America, I have been compelled to wander ever since, from land to land, like the mysterious Jew of the French novelist, Eugene Sue, with neither settled home nor abiding place of rest. What I saw and learned worth relating during my peregrinations, hither and thither, will make the subject of the *Second Series* of these sketches, which, if your patience is not exhausted or my repertoire does not give out, I trust to lay before you at no distant day. In the meantime you must excuse any imperfections in the style and composition of this book, considering that I write in a language which is not my own, and which often perplexes even those who have more claims to it than myself, so many are its grammatical irregularities.

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